

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT



PAUL JOSEPH

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HOW to Use God's operating system

Paul Joseph

Faith Without Borders

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How to Use This Book

Welcome! I am so glad you picked up this book. Everybody is scrolling for a quick fix. We download micro-habits, listen to endless podcasts, and follow people who promise peace in three easy steps, and by the middle of the afternoon the battery inside us is flat again. We all say it: there's an app for that. Well, there really is one. It is older than any telephone, it has never crashed, and it does not stop working when the signal drops.

This is not a book you have to read from front to back, although you can. It is a book you open in the middle, on a bad day, when something has gone wrong and you do not know where to look. Each chapter is one problem, with the three verses that are God's actual answer to it.

Part One installs the operating system in three teaching chapters: the app store, basic training, and the power supply. Please do not skip them. Every app after them runs on them, and without the system underneath you will wonder why nothing happens when you tap the screen. Then come the problem chapters, grouped by area of life: the heart, the body and the wallet, relationships, direction, the enemy and the unseen, and the big ones. The book closes with a chapter on living on the Word every day, and a prayer we pray together.

In each problem chapter you will find the trouble described in plain words, so that you recognise yourself in it. Then come the three verses, in bold, from the New King James Version, and a plain word on what they say and how to use them on an ordinary Tuesday. **The world's app** is an honest look at what the world offers for the same problem, and the exact point where it fails. **God's app** is why the Word holds, and how to run it today. Last

of all comes **Speak this:**, one line to say out loud.

Why out loud? Because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). When you say God's Word with your own mouth, your own ears hear it, your mind catches up, and the devil hears it too. Say it in the car. Say it at the sink.

Keep your cookies on the lower shelf, my old friend used to say. There is no theology in this book that a tired person cannot follow at the end of a long day.

The apps on your phone are somebody else's code. When you open the Word of God, the Author is present. That is the difference, and it is the whole difference.

A word about the world's answers. You will see me say, over and over, that the world's app fails. I am not sneering at doctors, counsellors, budgets or medicine, and neither is God. Use them. Take the medicine. See the counsellor. What I am after is the thing underneath: the world hands you a technique where you needed a Person, and a technique cannot love you, cannot see around the corner, and cannot promise.

If you are opening this book in a crisis, and you or someone near you is in danger, call for help first. Ring your doctor or your local emergency number, and tell someone you trust. Then open the book. God is happy to be with you while the help comes.

Here is a simple way to begin. Take the problem running loudest in your life this week. Find its chapter. Write the three verses out by hand on a card. Say them out loud every morning for a week, before you look at your phone. Then watch what God does with His own words.

Whatever you are carrying tonight, God spoke to it before you picked it up.

PART ONE

Installing the Operating System

CHAPTER 1

There's an App for That

Have you ever stepped back and watched people on a normal Monday morning? Everybody is holding a glowing piece of glass, tapping icons for the weather, the traffic, the bank, and even stress relief. If the car makes a funny knocking sound, we pull up a diagnostic program. We honestly believe that for every little problem in life, there's an app for that.

For the little things, there usually is. But watch what happens when the pressure really comes. Fear hits like a freight train. A marriage runs into an icy wall of silence. An addiction starts to threaten everything. Guilt makes it hard to breathe. Suddenly we look at the world's self-help app store and every icon is greyed out, frozen, or dead on delivery. They look useful. They promise everything. But nothing happens when you tap them.

Let me tell you about Trevor. His phone counted his steps, managed his money and turned his heating on before he got home. One afternoon he came out of a hospital appointment with news nobody wants to hear, and he sat in the car park with the engine off. He had forty apps on that phone, and not one of them could tell him he was going to be all right. The world's apps work beautifully right up until the moment you actually need them.

Here is the first lesson of this whole book. Why isn't anything working in your life? You're following the wrong rules, the rules of the world instead of the design of the One who made us.

Worldly advice works like a cheap third-party knockoff. The minute you launch it the whole system crashes, because the

world tries to fix spiritual rot with cosmetic polish. The world says, "Rebrand your self-image," while your soul is starving for righteousness. The world says, "Hustle your way out of anxiety," while your heart is sinking into despair.

God saw this coming a very long time ago. Listen to what He said through Jeremiah: **"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water."** (Jeremiah 2:13) There is the world's app store in one verse. We walked away from the fountain and worked very hard digging our own tanks, and every one of them leaks.

Now here is the good news. God never intended us to run our lives on cheap human software. He is the Developer. He designed you and He wrote the manual. Scripture is not a dusty religious ornament; it is the living operating system engineered by the Creator Himself.

Every human problem has a heavenly answer: a command to obey, a promise to believe, a warning to keep you out of danger, or a whole new way to think and live. God's promises are not wallpaper for your screen. They are support beams for your life. And the commands of Jesus are not random rules from a distant taskmaster. They are the exact operating manual for the human soul. When you operate outside His specifications, friction, burnout and devastation are guaranteed. When you yield to His Word, you find yourself running the way you were made to run.

So how do you get it? Look at the very first thing Jesus said when He began to preach. **"From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"** (Matthew 4:17) He did not come to offer suggestions. He came to establish His Kingdom. And He began with one word: repent.

A lot of people hear that word and picture a gloomy face. Not at all! Repentance is a total change of mind. It is not feeling terrible

about getting caught; it is a decisive turn of a full one hundred and eighty degrees, where you say, "My operating system is completely corrupted, and I need the Master Developer to install His original design."

Every major software update begins by removing the corrupt files and wiping out the spyware. You cannot install a clean system on top of a corrupted one. The wipe comes first.

And please hear this: that wipe is not punishment. It is the doorway to refreshing. Peter preached, **"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."** (Acts 3:19) Blotted out means deleted. Gone. And then, refreshing.

"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:10) The world's sorrow goes round in circles. Godly sorrow turns you around.

Now here is the sentence I want you to underline: the true Gospel does not offer you an upgraded version of your old fallen nature; it executes a total system wipe and establishes Christ within you.

You do not need a new coat of moral paint on your old life. You need a whole new engine. And that is exactly what God promised: **"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."** (Ezekiel 36:26) That is not a patch. That is a heart transplant. A hard heart is one of the most common problems in the human race, and the world has no app for it at all. God does.

And here is the mystery that changes everything. God does not just install a program in you. He installs a Person. **"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."** (Colossians 1:27) Christ in you! Not Christ near you, not Christ on a poster, not Christ on Sundays. In you. Paul

said it about his own life: **"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."** (Galatians 2:20)

So this book is not a collection of tips. The app is God's Word, God's Son and God's Spirit. Every chapter after this one is an app for a real problem, and every one of them runs on this. Skip the wipe and the new heart, and you will be tapping greyed-out icons again, only this time with Bible verses on them.

When Trevor sat in that car park, he finally did the one thing none of his apps could do for him. He prayed, honestly, for the first time in years. He told God his life was not working and he wanted Jesus to take over. Nothing about the diagnosis changed that afternoon. Everything about Trevor did.

The world says, "There's an app for that." Jesus says something far better: there is a promise for that, a command for that, grace for that, and power for that. But it starts with a clean install.

The world sells you upgrades; God starts with a wipe.

CHAPTER 2

Basic Training: Following the Developer's Commands

Welcome to basic training! If you have ever known someone who went through military training, you know that the drill instructors do not turn up on the first day with warm tea and a list of pleasant suggestions. They do not invite the recruits to vote on what time they feel like getting up. Basic training exists to break down bad civilian habits and build people who can follow orders without hesitating. It is about muscle memory, so that when the heat of battle comes, you do not freeze. You execute.

That is exactly what Jesus does with His disciples. He does not merely inform them; He trains them.

Look at the shore of Galilee. Jesus did not stroll up and say, "Hey lads, if you have some free time this weekend, maybe add a few of My spiritual ideas to your routine." No. **"Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'"** (Matthew 4:19)

Follow Me. That is a command, not a brochure. It meant leaving the old nets behind: relying on the world, being self-sufficient, needing everybody's approval. And notice what He did with their fishing. Everybody is fishing for something: customers, likes, approval, influence. Jesus does not kill that drive in you. He redirects it into something that lasts forever.

Here is the problem in so many lives today. Too many believers treat Christianity like a hobby, a nice bumper sticker on a life otherwise driven by the world's values. We pick and choose

which commands we like. We celebrate grace when we make a mistake, and we ignore every instruction that asks us to deny ourselves. We want heaven's help without heaven's leadership.

Jesus will not have it. **"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.'"** (Luke 9:23-24) A Roman cross was not a piece of jewellery or a decoration for the dashboard. It was an instrument of death. Taking up your cross daily means waking up every morning and praying, "Lord, not my selfish will today, but Yours be done."

Now here is the heart of this chapter. **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."** (John 14:15)

Read that slowly. Jesus does not say, "If you keep My commandments, I will love you." He loves you already; He proved it on the cross. He says that if you love Him, it will show. Obedience is not the wage you pay to earn salvation; it is the natural heartbeat of genuine love for the Saviour. You do not obey to get in. You obey because you are in, and because you love Him.

Jesus said it again so that nobody could miss it. **"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."** (John 14:21) Look at the reward for obedience: He shows Himself to you. Obedience is how you get close.

And He calls obedient people His friends: **"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."** (John 15:14) Obedience is not the payment of a frightened slave. It is the joyful response of a beloved friend.

The commands of Christ are not just a to-do list; they are an invitation to a relationship with God Himself. They are guardrails put up by a loving Father to keep us from speeding off a cliff.

"This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." (2 John 6)

Did you know you cannot say you love God unless you obey Him? John says it so plainly that it hurts. **"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."** (1 John 2:4) That is strong! But the very next verse is beautiful: **"But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."** (1 John 2:5)

Some people ask, "Aren't all the laws over now?" Jesus answered that Himself: **"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."**

(Matthew 5:17) He fulfilled God's moral law, and now He writes it on our hearts.

Of course, we cannot keep His commands without first knowing what they are. So here are the basics, the first things every new disciple is trained in:

- Repent and believe. **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."** (Mark 1:15)
- Be baptised (Acts 2:38).
- Pray, the way He taught us to pray (Matthew 6:9-13).
- Love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34).
- Remember Him at His table. **"This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** (Luke 22:19)
- Give (Luke 6:38).
- Make disciples, which we will come to near the end of this book.

And if you wonder what the most important rule in life is, Jesus summed up every command in loving God with everything you have (Matthew 22:37-38).

Basic training also strips away performance. It calls us to stop treating church like a theatre where we perform for human applause, and calls us into honest, private surrender to the living King. God looks straight through the outer casing and examines the heart.

Let me tell you about Owen. Owen had been a church member for twenty years. He could tell you which commands he liked, and which ones he had quietly decided belonged to an earlier century. Forgiving his brother was on that second list. So was giving. One Sunday it hit him that he did not have a knowledge problem; he had an obedience problem. So he picked the command he had been avoiding longest, and he rang his brother. The call was awkward and short, but it was done. Owen said afterwards that he learned more about Jesus in that one phone call than in twenty years of sitting in a pew. Of course he did. Jesus shows Himself to the one who obeys.

Here is the basic training test. Jesus did not say, "Sit in a classroom and critique My sermon." He said, "Follow Me." He did not say, "Agree with My ideas." He said, "Keep My commandments." This is not a spectator sport. The test happens tomorrow morning, when your boss treats you unfairly, when your family gets on your nerves, when nobody is watching.

So start where Owen started. Ask the Lord, "Which command have I been stepping around?" He will tell you. Then do it, today, out of love.

Love that never obeys is only a feeling with good manners.

CHAPTER 3

The Power Supply: Abiding, Not Striving

After the last chapter, you may be feeling a little nervous. The commands of Jesus are not small. Forgive again and again, without keeping count. Deal with even the hidden glance of lust. Love your bitterest enemy. Seek His Kingdom before your daily bread. And somewhere in your chest a little voice is asking, "How on earth can I possibly pull this off?"

Here is the honest, mind-blowing answer: you can't!

If your plan for the Christian life is to grit your teeth and try really, really hard to be like Jesus with your own willpower, you are heading for a crash. That is not the Gospel. That is legalistic misery! The Christian life is not "Try very hard and hope for the best." It is "Abide in Christ, walk in His words, and receive the strength He gives." Only by letting Jesus live His life through you can you truly love God and follow Him.

Think about your phone when the battery is dead. A dead phone cannot jump-start itself by wishing it had a hundred per cent. It can sit there all day being sincere. It must be plugged in. The power is not in the battery; it is in what the battery is connected to. In the same way, the commands of Christ were never meant to be obeyed in the weak, worn-out strength of your flesh. Trying to live the Christian life without His power is like trying to light a whole house with a torch battery.

God told Zerubbabel the same thing when the job in front of him was far too big: **"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD of hosts.**" (Zechariah 4:6) And Paul

admitted it about himself: **"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."** (2 Corinthians 3:5)

Now listen to the Developer explain how His power system works. **"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."** (John 15:4-5)

Without Me you can do nothing. Not "a little less". Nothing.

Fruit is not manufactured by effort; fruit is grown through connection. Picture an apple branch that has snapped off the tree, lying on the grass, sweating and straining and shouting at itself, "Produce an apple! Produce an apple right now!" It sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? A snapped branch might still look green for a few hours, but its life is gone. Yet many of us are spiritually exhausted because we are acting like severed branches lying on the lawn, trying to squeeze out love, patience and purity from nowhere.

A branch does not bear fruit by trying harder. Its only job is to stay joined to the trunk, and the sap does the rest. Your spiritual victory depends entirely on your connection to the True Vine.

Our culture measures success in followers, job titles and bank balances. God measures it differently. **"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."** (John 15:8) Real success is lasting fruit. And there is a promise tucked in with it: **"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."** (John 15:7) Notice that His words abiding in you is part of abiding in Him. That is why this book is full of His words.

So how do you abide in plain, everyday terms? Stay connected to Him in prayer. Soak your thoughts in the Scriptures. Keep short accounts with God, confessing sin quickly instead of letting it pile up. And let His life flow through you like sap through a branch.

It starts in the morning. Your posture should not be, "Lord, watch me try to obey You today." It should be, "Lord Jesus, I yield my mind, my tongue, my desires and my body to You. Live Your life through me today." Do you hear the difference? One is a performance. The other is a connection.

Let me tell you about Fiona. Every January, Fiona wrote a list of resolutions and stuck it on her fridge. Pray more. Shout at the children less. Stop the gossip. Read the Bible every day. By February, the list was still on the fridge, but all she had added to it was guilt. Every time she opened the door for the milk, the list told her she had failed again. One year she took it down. In its place she put one line: "Lord Jesus, live Your life through me today." She prayed it every morning before she opened that fridge. She still had bad days, but the fruit started to come, quietly, without the shouting. The list had been a scoreboard. The prayer was a plug.

Now here is the part nobody enjoys. **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."** (John 15:1-2)

Have you ever seen a vineyard right after the gardener has been through with his shears? It looks ruined! But come back at harvest time. When God prunes things out of your life, when He removes an unhealthy relationship, closes a door you badly wanted to walk through, or strips away a selfish comfort, it is not because He is angry with you. It is because He loves you too much to leave you barren. Let Him prune.

And here is the wonderful result of being connected. When He lives His life through you, His commands stop feeling like boulders on your back and become what they truly are: a pathway to freedom. John says, **"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."** (1 John 5:3) Not burdensome! They are only heavy when you try to carry them with your own arms. Plugged in, they are the way you were made to live.

This is why Paul could write one of the most famous verses in the Bible: **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."** (Philippians 4:13) People love to stop at "I can do all things." But it is "through Christ who strengthens me." The power is in the connection, not in the branch. And it is God doing the work inside you: **"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."** (Philippians 2:13) He gives you the wanting and the doing.

So when you read the commands of Jesus and think, "That's impossible," you are right. Jesus agrees with you: **"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."** (Matthew 19:26) You already have His love. Stay plugged in, and let the life flow.

A branch has never once had to try.

PART TWO

The Heart

CHAPTER 4

Worry

Brenda's son had just passed his driving test, and on Saturday he was driving three hours on his own for the first time. Brenda lay awake the night before and ran through every way it could go wrong. The tyre. The lorry. The rain. By three in the morning she had lived through about forty disasters. That afternoon he rang to say he had arrived. Not one of the forty had happened. The only casualty was Brenda.

That is worry. It feels like preparation, but it is really rehearsal, and you are rehearsing a scene God never wrote. It is a phone notification that keeps buzzing when there is no emergency. It is a rocking chair: it gives you something to do, but it gets you nowhere.

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34)

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Jesus does not pretend you have no needs. He simply says, "Your heavenly Father knows." Worry is really an identity problem. It

acts as if you were a cosmic orphan, holding the universe together with your bare hands. But you have a Father, and He already has an itemised list of everything you need.

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26) Your Father is already feeding things that cannot worry. Then Jesus asks a question that should make us smile: **"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"** (Matthew 6:27) Worry has never added one thing to tomorrow. It only drains today's strength.

And notice Peter's word: casting. You throw it. You do not set it down gently where you can pick it up again on the way back.

So here is your ordinary Tuesday. When the worry starts buzzing, write it down. Ask, "Is this mine to carry, or His?" If a piece is yours for today, such as a phone call or a bill, do it. Then pray the rest over to your Father and stop rehearsing tomorrow. Much of our worry is control dressed up as concern, and God is asking you to hand Him the remote.

The world's app: manage it. Plan, breathe, control the variables. Planning is good and breathing is good, but they cannot carry the weight, because worry was never a management problem. It is a trust problem.

God's app: seek His Kingdom first and hand the rest to your Father, every time it comes back. He has taken on the responsibility for your needs, and He does not lose the list.

Speak this: My Father knows what I need. I cast this care on Him, and I will live today in today.

Worry is the tax you pay on a disaster that never arrives.

CHAPTER 5

Fear

Colin was offered a promotion. It was everything he had worked for, except for one thing: once a month he would have to stand up and speak to a room of two hundred people. He turned it down. He told his wife it was the hours. It was really the dread of his mouth going dry and two hundred faces watching him fail. Fear made the decision for him.

Fear does not only shake you; it starts running your life. It speaks in "what if". What if I fail? What if they laugh? What if the scan comes back bad?

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment." (1 John 4:18)

The Bible calls it a spirit of fear, and that is good news, because in Jesus you have authority over it. Your body and your history may be involved, but you are not at fear's mercy. God gave you power, love and a sound mind. A sound mind is not one that never feels a jolt. It is a steady mind that feels the jolt and does not let it take the wheel.

Look at God's answer in Isaiah. It is never "be braver." It is "I am with you." He does not improve your courage; He changes who is standing beside you. **"Be strong and of good courage; do not**

be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) Wherever. Including that room of two hundred.

And John tells you where fear goes when love comes in: out. The more you know how much your Father loves you, the less room there is for torment.

Jesus even shows us which fear to keep. **"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."** (Matthew 10:28) When you reverently fear God, you need fear nothing and nobody else.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, when fear says "what if", answer it out loud with "even if". Even if they laugh, God is with me. Even if the news is bad, God is with me.

Colin got a second chance a year later, and this time he said yes. He did not stop being nervous. He stopped being alone. Before every talk he quietly spoke Isaiah 41:10, walked up, and found God standing there with him.

The world's app: self-confidence. Believe in yourself. It fails because confidence built on yourself is only as strong as your worst day, and your worst day is coming.

God's app: name fear as an intruder, evict it in the name of Jesus, and fill the space with what God said. Fear hates being spoken to out loud.

Speak this: Spirit of fear, you have no place in me. God is with me, and I have power, love and a sound mind.

Fear asks what if; faith answers, even if, God is here.

CHAPTER 6

Anxiety and Panic

Megan was standing in a supermarket queue with a trolley full of shopping when her heart began to race for no reason at all. Her chest went tight and she was suddenly sure something terrible was about to happen. Nothing was happening. The woman in front was paying for her eggs. But Megan felt the whole room tilting.

Anxiety is worry with the volume broken. Panic is the body joining in: the racing heart, the tight chest, the feeling of doom in a room where nothing is wrong. If that is you, you are not crazy and you are not a bad Christian. And God has spoken to it.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)

Notice what Paul does not say. He does not say, "Just stop being anxious." He says swap it. Take the anxiety off the replay loop and turn it into a request. Prayer goes in, worry comes out, and thanksgiving is the handle you carry it by. The peace that follows is not the absence of the problem. It is a guard posted at the door

of your heart and mind while the problem is still there.

Isaiah tells you where that peace lives: in a mind that is stayed, leaning, propped against something. Peace is not a mood you wait for. It is the result of where you put your weight. And Jesus' peace is not the world's kind, which lasts only while circumstances behave. His stays.

David knew the feeling. **"In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul."** (Psalm 94:19) The same Jesus who stood up in the boat and said, "Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:39) can speak to the storm inside you.

So here is the ordinary Tuesday, in the moment it hits. Slow down. Put a hand on something solid. Name what is true: "I am safe, God is here." Say one verse, quietly if you must. Thank God for one specific thing, because thanksgiving is the handle. And let people in.

That is what Megan learned. She put one hand on the trolley, breathed, and quietly said Isaiah 26:3 until the room stopped tilting. She also went to her doctor, who helped too.

The world's app: distract it or numb it. Both work for an hour. Neither moves the weight of your mind off the thing that is crushing it. Medicine your doctor gives you is not unbelief; take it. But only a Person can carry the weight underneath.

God's app: move the weight. Out loud, deliberately, one verse at a time, until your body catches up with your spirit.

Speak this: My mind is stayed on You, Lord, and Your peace is guarding my heart right now.

Peace is not the absence of the storm; it is a guard at the door while the wind still blows.

CHAPTER 7

Depression and Discouragement

Neville spent forty years as an engineer, telling people why bridges stay up. Then he retired, and something inside him came down. He stopped answering the phone. His Bible sat on the side table, and every promise in it looked like a poster on someone else's wall.

If that is you, hear this first. In the fog of depression you cannot manufacture a feeling, so do not try. God is not asking you to climb out on your own.

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." (Psalm 42:5)

"The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." (Psalm 34:18)

"To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah 61:3)

Look at what the psalmist is doing. He is not listening to his soul; he is talking to it. Most of us let the soul do all the talking:

"You're finished. Nobody cares." The psalmist answers back:

"Hope in God." And notice the little word "yet". He does not feel like praising, but he shall yet praise. He is preaching to himself on credit, and God honours the cheque.

Now look at where God is standing in Psalm 34. Near. God is closest when the spirit is lowest.

Then look at Elijah, fresh from watching fire fall from heaven, lying under a broom tree asking to die (1 Kings 19:4). God gave

him no lecture. He let him sleep, and an angel woke him with bread, and came a second time: "**Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.**" (1 Kings 19:7) Rest, bread, presence, and only then a word. If God fed Elijah before He spoke to him, He is not ashamed of you needing sleep, a meal and a doctor.

So let me say it plainly. Seeing a doctor or a counsellor is wise, and it is not a lack of faith. Take the medicine. Keep the appointment. And if you are thinking about ending your life, call or text 988 (in the US) or your local emergency number now, and tell someone you trust today.

The world's app: distraction, or "just think positive". It fails because it asks a crushed person to lift himself, and lifting is the one thing a crushed person cannot do.

God's app: God comes down to where you are, and He sends people. On an ordinary Tuesday, read Psalm 42 out loud in the morning, even on days you feel nothing. Tell one person how you really are. Neville let a friend sit with him without a sermon, kept the doctor's appointment he had cancelled twice, and read Psalm 42 aloud every morning. The fog did not lift in a day, but it lifted, and he can say with David, "**He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.**" (Psalm 40:2)

Speak this: Soul, hope in God. I shall yet praise Him, and He is near me right now.

God does not wait at the top of the pit; He climbs down into it.

CHAPTER 8

Loneliness

Doris had four hundred friends online and nobody who had been inside her house for a year. She knew what her niece had for dinner on the other side of the world. She did not know the name of the woman next door.

Loneliness is not the absence of people. You can be lonely in a crowded room and at peace on your own. Loneliness is the absence of being known. Here is God's answer:

"For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" (Hebrews 13:5)

"God sets the solitary in families." (Psalm 68:6)

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Start with that first promise. The Greek behind it stacks the negatives up: never, not ever, under no circumstances. He was closing every exit. Jesus said the same on His last night with His friends: **"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."** (John 14:18)

Then look at His method. God's answer to a solitary person is not only Himself. It is a family. That is what the church is for: people who know your name and notice when you are missing. **"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."** (Romans 12:5) A hand cut off from the body does not become independent. It just goes cold.

That is why Hebrews tells us to keep turning up. You cannot stir up someone you never see. **"Two are better than one ... For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up."** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Now the ordinary Tuesday part, and it is the hard part. Loneliness asks to be left alone. It whispers, "Don't bother them. They won't want you. Stay in." Do the opposite. Tell God first, out loud, how lonely you are; He can take it. Then do the brave small thing. Go to the midweek group. Invite one person for a cup of tea. Answer the message instead of leaving it unread. And if you are not lonely at all, look along your row on Sunday. Somebody near you is.

The world's app: connection without commitment. A screen full of faces and a heart still empty. It fails because being seen is not the same as being known, and a "like" will not sit with you in the hospital.

God's app: His presence first, then His family. Doris wrote Hebrews 13:5 on a card and stuck it to her fridge. Then she went along to a church house group that met two streets away. In the second week she mentioned a cold, and the next evening someone knocked on her door with soup. She cried on the doorstep, not because she was sad, but because somebody had noticed.

Speak this: The Lord will never leave me nor forsake me, and He has set me in a family.

Being seen by many is not the same as being known by One.

CHAPTER 9

Grief and Loss

For a whole year after her husband died, Margaret set two cups out every morning. Her head knew he was gone. Her hands had not caught up.

Grief is love with nowhere to go. There is no verse that makes it stop hurting, and anyone who tells you otherwise has not buried anybody. But there are verses that hold you while it hurts. That is a different thing.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
(Matthew 5:4)

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn." He does not say blessed are those who cope well, or keep busy. He says the mourners are the ones who will be comforted. You cannot be comforted over a loss you refuse to feel.

And He never kept grief at arm's length. At the tomb of His friend Lazarus, knowing full well He was about to raise him, **"Jesus wept."** (John 11:35) If the Son of God cried at a graveside, your tears are not unbelief.

Now Psalm 23. Two words carry that verse. Through: you are not being asked to live in the valley; you are walking through it. And

shadow: a shadow can frighten you, but it cannot crush you. Something has to stand in the light to cast a shadow, and that Someone has already walked out of a tomb. **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."** (John 11:25)

Now Paul. He does not say, "Do not sorrow." He says do not sorrow as those who have no hope. He gives you permission to grieve, with a different kind of grief.

A word to couples who have lost a child or a parent together. You will not grieve in the same way or at the same speed. One wants to talk every night; the other goes quiet in the shed. Neither of you is wrong. Give each other grace. Grief counselling is a good gift from God; take it. **"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."** (Psalm 147:3) A wound heals at the speed of a wound, and He is a patient Physician.

The world's app: time heals, so keep busy. It fails because time does not heal. It dulls, which is not the same thing.

God's app: a Person in the valley with you, and a date on the other side of it. On an ordinary Tuesday that means telling Him the plain truth: "Lord, I miss her." It means saying the name out loud, letting the tears come when they come, and saying yes when someone brings a meal. The morning Margaret finally put one cup back in the cupboard, she did not feel healed. She felt carried.

Speak this: The Lord is with me in this valley, and I am walking through it, not living in it.

Christians still cry; we just cry with a reunion on the calendar.

CHAPTER 10

Guilt and Shame

Wayne went forward at every altar call for thirty years. Same sin, from his twenties, confessed again and again. Every time the preacher said, "Is there anyone here carrying something?" Wayne's hand went up. Forgiven on Sunday, guilty again by Wednesday.

Guilt says, "You did something bad." Shame says, "You are something bad." God deals with both, and very differently from the way you have been dealing with them.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

Look at the word "just" in 1 John 1:9. God is not being soft with you. The debt was paid in full by Somebody else at the cross, and justice itself now requires that you go free. So when you confess, forgiveness is not a maybe. It is the faithful and just thing for God to do.

Then look at the geography of Psalm 103. He did not say "as far as the north is from the south." North and south meet at the poles. Travel east and you can go on for ever without once heading west. Your sin has been sent somewhere it can never meet you

again. And Isaiah: "**Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.**" (Isaiah 1:18)

Now Romans 8:1. "No condemnation." Not less condemnation, not condemnation on probation. None. God has issued a final verdict, and there is no court of appeal above His.

Here is the difference that sets people free. Real guilt is cured by confession. If you did it, own it, as David did when Nathan confronted him: "**I have sinned against the LORD.**" (2 Samuel 12:13) Then he prayed, "**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**" (Psalm 51:10) God restored him. But false guilt is cured by truth. If you are carrying shame for something that was done to you, that is not yours to confess. It is a lie to reject. "**Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.**" (Romans 9:33)

The world's app: forgive yourself. It sounds kind, but it fails on a point of law. The debt was never owed to you, so you have no authority to cancel it. Only the One it was owed to can do that, and He already has.

God's app: confess it once, honestly, receive the cleansing, and then stand on the verdict. The replay will start, usually at three in the morning. Answer it out loud: "That was confessed. That was cleansed. There is no condemnation." Wayne finally saw the word "just" and understood. At the next altar call he did not go forward. He stood up where he was and worshipped, because he was free.

Speak this: I confessed it, God cleansed it, and there is now no condemnation for me in Christ Jesus.

You cannot cancel a debt that was never owed to you, but you can stop paying one that God has already marked paid.

CHAPTER 11

Rejection

Leanne opened the email on the bus. It was her eleventh job interview that year, and the eleventh "Thank you, but you are not quite what we're looking for." She did not hear it as a sentence about one job. She heard it as a sentence about her whole life.

That is what rejection does. It teaches you a lie about yourself, and then makes you live as though the lie were the verdict. It might be a parent who walked out, a husband who left, a friend group that quietly stopped inviting you. Here is God's answer:

"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:3)

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me." (Psalm 27:10)

"To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

Start with Isaiah 53. Jesus knows rejection, and not in theory. He was turned away by His own town and abandoned by His own disciples. **"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."** (John 1:11) You are not explaining anything new to Him. He has the scars.

Then Psalm 27:10. David imagines the worst rejection a human being can face, his own mother and father turning their backs, and he says even then, the Lord takes him in. There is no rejection so deep that God's acceptance does not go deeper.

Now Ephesians 1:6. Read the tense. He "made" us accepted. It is done. And we are accepted "in the Beloved", that is, in Christ.

Your acceptance is not based on your performance in the interview, the marriage or the family. It is based on your position in Somebody else. And Jesus promised, **"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."** (John 6:37) Not "probably won't". By no means.

Rejection has a twin, and it is people-pleasing. If you have been rejected enough, you start bending yourself into whatever shape will stop it happening again. Paul faced that and settled it: **"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."** (Galatians 1:10)

The world's app: chase approval, or stop caring altogether. One turns you into a beggar; the other turns you into a stone. Both fail, because neither one touches the lie that was planted in you.

God's app: receive an acceptance that was settled before you walked into the room, so you can walk out of it with your feet still under you. On an ordinary Tuesday, when the door closes, say what God says about you before you repeat what they said. **"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"** (Psalm 118:6) Leanne started doing exactly that. She would read the email, put the phone down, and say out loud, "I am accepted in the Beloved. This was one job, not my life." The twelfth interview did not go well either. The thirteenth did. But by then, it was not the job that had set her free.

Speak this: I am accepted in the Beloved, and no closed door can cancel that.

What man refused cannot overturn what God accepted.

CHAPTER 12

Anger

Barry shouted at the football on Saturday afternoon and at his family on Sunday morning. He called it "passion". His wife called it "walking on eggshells". His teenage son did not call it anything; he just went to his room and shut the door.

Here is something that surprises people: anger is not a sin. God gets angry, and so did Jesus. What God never does is hold it overnight or hand it to the wrong person.

"Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:26-27)

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

Look at Ephesians. Paul gives you permission to feel anger, then gives you a deadline, then tells you exactly what happens if you miss it. Sunset. Anger kept overnight does not evaporate. It rents a room to the devil: "nor give place to the devil." You are not just losing your cool. You are handing over a key.

James gives you the order of operations: ears first, mouth second, temper last. Most of us run it backwards. Try a simple ten-second rule. When the heat rises, close your mouth and open your ears for ten seconds. You will be astonished how many wars never start. And your anger, however justified it feels, has never once produced God's righteousness.

Then Proverbs 15:1, the fire extinguisher. A harsh word is petrol. A soft answer is water. You do not have to win the argument to end it. **"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."** (Proverbs 16:32) Ruling your spirit is harder than capturing a city, and God counts it as the greater victory.

And watch out for anger's quiet partner: grumbling. The man who never shouts but complains about everything is often just as angry, only slower.

The world's app: let it out. Express it. Vent. It fails because venting is practice. Every time you rehearse the rage, you get better at it. Scripture said so long ago: **"A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back."** (Proverbs 29:11)

God's app: feel it, say it to God, settle it before dark, and give the soft answer that costs you something. On an ordinary Tuesday, when your boss is unfair or the driver cuts in, choose the soft answer. If you were the one who raised the volume, be the first to say sorry. Barry tried it. The soft answer felt like losing, every single time. Then one evening he heard his son, mid-argument with his little sister, stop, breathe, and say quietly, "Sorry. Let's start again." Barry went out to the car and wept. His son had been watching all along.

Speak this: I am swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, and the sun will not go down on my anger.

Anger kept overnight does not cool; it moves in.

CHAPTER 13

Bitterness and Unforgiveness

At their mother's funeral, Sandra's sister said something in the car park that Sandra could still quote word for word six years later. She replayed it every night before she went to sleep, and rehearsed what she should have said back. She told herself it was justice. It never felt like justice. It felt like poison.

Bitterness is anger that moved in and put up shelves. It always feels like justice, and it always costs the wrong person.

"Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled." (Hebrews 12:15)

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

Look at the word "root" in Hebrews. A root works underground. By the time you can see bitterness, it has been growing for a long time. And the damage is never contained: "many become defiled." Your children can taste a root you planted before they were born. Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Now Ephesians. "Put away." That is a choice, not a feeling. You do not wait until you feel like forgiving, any more than you wait

to feel like taking out the rubbish. And look at the measure: "even as God in Christ forgave you." When you remember how much you have been forgiven, the debt someone owes you starts to look a great deal smaller.

Then Romans 12:19. It is not "let it go", as if the wrong did not matter. It is "hand the case to a better Judge." Forgiveness is not excusing an injustice; it is transferring the case from your corrupt court of vengeance to God's supreme court of absolute righteousness. You are not dropping the charge. You are moving it to a court that cannot be deceived. Joseph could say what he said to the brothers who sold him (Genesis 50:20) because he had left the sentencing to God.

Revenge keeps the wound open; forgiveness starts the healing. And Jesus tied our own freedom to it: **"Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."** (Mark 11:25)

The world's app: hold them accountable until they are sorry. It fails because it makes your freedom depend on their repentance, and they may never repent.

God's app: forgive as a decision, not a feeling, and keep forgiving until the feeling follows. On an ordinary Tuesday, name the debt specifically. Say, "Lord, I release it to You." When it rises again tomorrow, say it again. Then pray one blessing over them, even through gritted teeth. Sandra did exactly that. She did not ring her sister. She did not feel warm. But for the first time in six years, she slept right through.

Speak this: I hand this case to You, Lord. Vengeance is Yours, and I am free.

Bitterness promises justice and sends the bill to you.

CHAPTER 14

Jealousy and Comparison

At midnight Kirsty was still scrolling. Another mum's little girl had had a unicorn birthday party: a three-tier cake and a hired pony. Kirsty looked at her own daughter's party photos, a supermarket cake and six children in a front room, and felt something tighten in her chest. Nothing bad had happened to her. She had just watched something good happen to somebody else. Comparison is the fastest way to lose your joy over somebody else's good news.

"A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones." (Proverbs 14:30)

"But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load." (Galatians 6:4-5)

"Jesus said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.'" (John 21:22)

Look at Proverbs. Envy does not attack the person you envy. It works on you, quietly, in the bones. They go on enjoying their pony. You are the one rotting.

Now Galatians 6. Paul's remedy is not to think less of them. It is to look at your own work and your own load. God never asked you to carry their life. He asked you to carry yours. **"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12)**

Then the scene in John 21, one of my favourites. Jesus has just restored Peter and told him how his life will end. And what does Peter do? He turns round, sees John, and asks what will happen to him. Jesus' answer is wonderfully blunt. "What is that to you? You follow Me." In plain words: mind your own business and follow Jesus. That works with colleagues, siblings, and Christians whose ministry looks bigger than yours.

Comparison wears many costumes. It is the fear of missing out, the quiet sense that you are owed what they have, the jealousy when a younger colleague is promoted, even spiritual comparison: "She prays better than me." **"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."** (James 3:16)

The world's app: catch up. Get what they have and the ache will stop. It fails because the ache was never about the thing, and there is always one more person ahead of you. And online you are comparing your ordinary Tuesday with everybody else's highlights.

God's app: gratitude, out loud, especially about somebody else's blessing. **"Rejoice with those who rejoice."** (Romans 12:15)

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18) On an ordinary Tuesday, put the phone down after the third scroll. Thank God out loud for one good thing in someone else's life and one in yours. Kirsty started with the mum who had the pony. She prayed for her by name. Within a month the tightness in her chest had gone.

Speak this: What is that to me? I will follow Jesus, and I thank Him for what He has given them and me.

Comparison steals your joy and leaves their blessing exactly where it was.

CHAPTER 15

Pride

Clive had been a deacon for twenty-two years, and he could spot every flaw in the worship team from the back row. The drummer was too loud. The new keyboard player was too young. Then one Sunday lunch his eight-year-old grandson looked up from his plate and asked, "Granddad, why do you never say sorry?" The table went very quiet.

Pride is the only sin that convinces you it is a virtue while you are committing it, and it is the one God actively opposes.

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" (James 4:6)

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:5)

Look at James 4:6. "Resists" is a strong word. It means God sets Himself against the proud. You are choosing which side of God you would like to be standing on.

Proverbs 16:18 gives you the order. Pride first, destruction after.

Now Jesus in Matthew 7. He asks, **"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3)** Picture a man with a great construction beam sticking out of his eye, squinting round the wood, trying to pick a tiny speck of sawdust out of his friend's eye. It is absurd. Jesus meant it to be funny, and He meant it to

sting. We are expert defence lawyers for our own sins and merciless prosecutors for everyone else's. So before you criticise anyone, sit before the Holy Spirit and let Him show you your own blind spots.

Pride says, "I know better." It loves applause and control. Jesus answers pride with humility, service and self-denial. Look at Him: He **"made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant ... He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."** (Philippians 2:7-8) The highest went lowest, on purpose. **"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."** (Philippians 2:3)

The world's app: believe in yourself, promote yourself, build the brand. It fails because a reputation you built is a reputation you now have to defend, every day, for the rest of your life.

God's app: Peter puts it simply: **"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."** (1 Peter 5:6) You humble yourself; God exalts. On an ordinary Tuesday, go low on purpose. Say sorry first. Ask for advice. Let someone else take the credit. Clive went home that Sunday and wrote three notes: one to the drummer, one to the keyboard player, and one to his wife. Each began with "I am sorry." His grandson never asked the question again.

Speak this: Lord, I humble myself under Your mighty hand. Show me the plank in my own eye first.

Pride is the one sin that applauds itself while it falls.

CHAPTER 16

Low Self-Worth

Tanya was fifteen, and she knew her exact value to the nearest digit. It was the number of likes under her latest photo. Forty-three meant a good day. Eleven meant she was ugly, boring and probably unloved.

You may be well past fifteen and still doing the same thing with a different scoreboard: your salary, your waistline, your children's results.

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:14)

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Look at Psalm 139. David does not say, "I think I'm all right." He says he is fearfully and wonderfully made, and his soul knows it very well. You are not an accident that God is making the best of. You are something He composed. You were made in His own image (Genesis 1:27), face and shape included. So stop insulting the Artist.

There is a kind of Christian who thinks running himself down is humility. It is not. It is calling God's workmanship shoddy. Humility is agreeing with God about yourself, and God is saying something very good.

Now 1 Peter 2:9. Chosen. Royal. Holy. His own special people. That is not a pep talk; it is your new identity. You have been adopted into the royal family, and royalty does not beg for crumbs of approval.

Then the price. Peter says you were not bought with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. In any market a thing is worth what someone will pay for it. God looked at you and paid with the blood of His own Son. That is the price, and the price settles the worth. "**Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you.**" (Isaiah 43:4)

This matters more than we think. People who do not know their worth sell it cheaply, to the first person who notices them or a crowd that does not care.

The world's app: self-esteem. Talk yourself up in the mirror. It fails because you know yourself too well to believe your own advertising for long.

God's app: stop measuring yourself at all, and take God's valuation instead. On an ordinary Tuesday, when the old scoreboard flashes up, answer it with Psalm 139:14 out loud. Tanya's grandmother sat her down at the kitchen table with an open Bible and a price tag from a shop. On the tag she wrote, "Paid in full: the blood of Jesus," and tucked it into Tanya's phone case. Tanya still posts photos. She just stopped counting.

Speak this: I am fearfully and wonderfully made, chosen and bought with the precious blood of Christ.

Your worth was settled at the cross, and the price was not a bargain.

CHAPTER 17

Insecurity About God's Love

Gwen kept a reading chart on the inside cover of her Bible. Every day she read, she ticked a box. In weeks full of ticks she felt that God loved her. In weeks with gaps she felt Him go cold.

Almost every believer has a quiet fear underneath everything else: that God loves them on a sliding scale, and this week the scale is down.

"The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.'" (Jeremiah 31:3)

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

Start with Jeremiah. "Everlasting" love. It did not start when you got your life together, and it will not stop when you have a bad month.

Now Romans 5:8, and look at the timing. Not after we cleaned up. "While we were still sinners." He loved you at your worst, which means your worst cannot be the thing that ends it.

Then Romans 8. Paul writes a list of everything anyone could think of: death, life, angels, principalities, powers, the present, the future, height, depth. Then, in case he missed something, he

adds "nor any other created thing." That covers you, too. You cannot separate yourself from that love either.

Look at Jesus' picture of the Father in Luke 15. The son who wasted everything comes home with a speech prepared. **"But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."**

(Luke 15:20) The father ran. He did not wait for the speech. And **"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"** (1 John 3:1)

Children, not employees.

Some of us keep God at arm's length because we feel unworthy. But He is not waiting to inspect you. **"He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."** (Zephaniah 3:17)

The world's app: earn it. Perform well enough and you will feel loved. It fails because anything you can earn, you can lose the moment the work stops, so you never rest.

God's app: receive a love that was settled before you were born and cannot be revoked by your bad week. On an ordinary Tuesday, read Romans 8:38-39 out loud and add your own list: "Not my missed prayers, not my temper, not my doubts." Gwen had a week when everything went wrong. Her mother was in hospital, and her Bible stayed shut. On the Sunday morning she sat in church and braced herself for God's disappointment. Instead she felt Him near, as near as ever. She went home and tore up the chart.

Speak this: Nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

A love you earn is a wage; His is an inheritance.

PART THREE

The Body and the Wallet

CHAPTER 18

Sickness

Roger knew the room. The plastic chairs, the name called out a little too loudly, then the smaller room and a word he would carry home in his coat pocket for weeks. Sickness does not only attack the body. It moves into your thoughts and whispers "what if" all night long.

What does God's operating system have for that room? More than most of us were ever told.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." (Psalm 103:2-3)

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up." (James 5:14-15)

Settle this first. Healing is not a bonus God adds if He is in a good mood. It was bought at the same moment, by the same stripes, as the forgiveness of your sins. Peter looked back at the cross and said it in the past tense: **"who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed."** (1 Peter 2:24)

Look at Psalm 103. David puts forgiveness and healing in the same sentence. If you take the first half for yourself, why leave the second half on the table?

And look at Jesus. Matthew tells us He **"healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'"** (Matthew 8:16-17) He never sent anyone away saying, "Not you, this one is building your character."

On an ordinary Tuesday, James gives you the practice. Call for the elders. Let them anoint you and pray. And pray for others, because Jesus said of those who believe, **"they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."** (Mark 16:18)

Hear me clearly. Use the doctor. Take the medicine. God made the doctor's mind too. Roger found no contest between them. He saw the consultant on a Tuesday and went forward to the elders on the Sunday. He took his tablets every morning with Isaiah 53:5 out loud. And stand on the Word over all of it, because the Word outranks the report.

Some healings are instant and some come slowly. Keep praying, keep the doctor, keep standing. God is not on a stopwatch, and His promise does not expire.

The world's app: medicine alone. It is a good servant and a poor master. It can treat a body, and thank God it does, but it cannot promise you anything.

God's app: a covenant that includes your body, and a Healer who is not embarrassed by your symptoms. He still says, **"I am the LORD who heals you."** (Exodus 15:26)

Speak this: By His stripes I am healed, and I receive it today in the name of Jesus.

The report tells you what is; the Word tells you what Jesus paid for.

CHAPTER 19

Chronic Pain and Weakness

Some things do not lift in a week. A sudden illness is a storm; chronic pain is the weather. It is there when you wake, and there when friends stop asking because the answer never changes. It needs a different kind of endurance.

If that is you, this chapter is here to hand you something to hold.

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

"My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:26)

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Paul was not a man with small faith, and he still had something he called a thorn. He prayed about it three times. Keep praying for the healing; God has not withdrawn the offer, and the chapter before this one is still true. But while you wait, the grace on offer is not a consolation prize. It is strength that only shows up in weakness, and strong people never find it. Paul ended up saying, **"For when I am weak, then I am strong."** (2 Corinthians 12:10)

The psalmist is honest too. "My flesh and my heart fail." The body gives out and the courage follows. But he does not stop there. God is the strength of my heart. God Himself, as my

portion, today.

And 2 Corinthians 4:17 is the long lens. When pain feels endless, Paul calls it light and momentary. Not because it is small, but because of what it is weighed against.

So what does that look like on an ordinary Tuesday? Ask for today's grace in the morning, not next month's. God promised, **"As your days, so shall your strength be."** (Deuteronomy 33:25) Plan the day around the strength you actually have. Let other people help; that is the body of Christ working. Keep a little list of the small mercies. And keep seeing your doctor and using what helps.

Yvonne had a bad back for fifteen years. Every morning she used to ask God, "Why not yet?" One day she changed the question to, "What grace for today?" She still asks for healing. She has never stopped. But the second question gets answered every single morning, and it has changed the shape of her days.

Job said in the dark, **"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."** (Job 13:15) And the book ends with the Lord restoring Job.

The world's app: grit your teeth, endure, and lower your expectations. It fails because it gives you nothing to draw on but yourself, and you are the thing that has run out.

God's app: a daily renewal you wait for and receive, not a reserve you manufacture. He is present in the pain, today.

Speak this: His grace is enough for me today, and His strength is made perfect right here in my weakness.

Grace does not come in a stockpile; it comes in daily bread, and it is always enough for today.

CHAPTER 20

Addiction and Bad Habits

It starts as a choice and ends as a schedule. The drink that used to be for celebrations is now for Tuesdays. The bet, the screen, the bottle, the browser: each one promised a little relief and quietly took the keys to the house.

Hear this first. An addiction is not just a lack of willpower. It is a master. And the Bible has a great deal to say about changing masters, which is very different from trying harder.

"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18)

Jesus does not offer a slightly better habit. He offers freedom indeed.

Look closely at Romans 6:16. Paul's word is "present".

Something in you hands itself over before the act. That is where the fight is won or lost, and it is earlier than you think. The battle is not at the bottle; it is at the moment you decide to drive past the shop.

And Ephesians 5:18 shows you God's swap. He does not just take the drink away and leave a hole. He fills it. Replace the chemical spirits with the Holy Spirit. The comfort you were reaching for,

He gives for real, and it does not leave you worse in the morning.

On an ordinary Tuesday, tell one person. Not everyone, one

trusted person. **"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."** (James 5:16)

Remove the access: the app, the number, the bottle. **"Make no provision for the flesh."** (Romans 13:14) Plan for the hour when

it usually wins. Ask to be filled with the Spirit every morning.

And get help. A doctor, a counsellor, a recovery group: these are wisdom, not a lack of faith, and God uses them.

Darren was trapped in a cycle of late-night pornography and

secret drinking. He was terrified his small group would find out.

Finally he confessed to a mature older man in his church. Instead

of condemnation he found tears, fierce prayer and practical

accountability. He put monitoring software on his laptop and

gave his phone password to his mentor. Was it instant? No. But

he found God's way out every time (there is more on that in the

chapter on Temptation). Today Darren walks in freedom and

coaches other young men.

If you slip, do not quit. A setback is not the end of the story. Get

up, tell your person, and keep walking. **"Stand fast therefore in**

the liberty by which Christ has made us free." (Galatians 5:1)

The world's app: willpower, or managing the habit. It fails

because you are trying to out-muscle a master while still

reporting to him.

God's app: a change of ownership, then accountability with

people who will tell you the truth. Freedom is received, and then

it is walked out.

Speak this: The Son has made me free, and today I present

myself to God, not to this.

You will never out-muscle a master you still report to.

CHAPTER 21

Lust and Sexual Temptation

This one is fought in private, which is exactly why so many good people lose it. Nobody is watching, and that is the whole trap. It is late, you are tired, you are a bit lonely, and the laptop is open. The world calls it harmless. Jesus does not.

"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
(Matthew 5:28)

"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" (Job 31:1)

Jesus cuts straight past the physical act and goes to the eye and the imagination. Then He says something shocking: **"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you."** (Matthew 5:29) He was not telling us to harm ourselves; the left eye could still lust. He was using a startling picture to show that sin must be treated with ruthless seriousness. You do not negotiate with a snake in your bedroom. You throw it out. Delete the account, block the contact, cut off the access point.

Then notice Paul's word. He does not say resist. He says run. Joseph knew it. When Potiphar's wife grabbed him, **"he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside."** (Genesis 39:12) Paul told Timothy the same: **"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who**

call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

And Job shows you when to decide. He made his covenant with his eyes once, in advance, in the cold, when nothing was happening. A decision made in the heat is not a decision; it is a reaction.

So decide now, while it is calm. Move the phone charger out of the bedroom. Put a filter on every device. Tell one friend who will ask you straight questions. If you are married, the cure for lust is love: turn your thoughts and your attention towards your spouse, and if you need help, see a counsellor together. **"Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."** (Galatians 5:16)

Craig, a single man, made his covenant with his eyes on a quiet Sunday afternoon, not in a moment of crisis. That night he moved his charger to the kitchen. The next day he told one friend everything. The temptation still knocked, but now it met locked doors.

And be encouraged about the reward: **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."** (Matthew 5:8)

The world's app: it is natural, so indulge it. It fails because it treats a person as a product, and it always takes more next time to reach the same place.

God's app: a covenant with your eyes made ahead of time, and feet that are willing to walk out of the room.

Speak this: I have made a covenant with my eyes, and today I run from what would ruin me.

Some battles are won by standing; this one is won by leaving the room.

CHAPTER 22

Overeating and Self-Control

We will preach for an hour on drink and never mention the table. The Bible is not so shy. So let us talk about it, gently, with no finger-wagging.

Maybe you know the evening routine. The house goes quiet, the day finally stops, and you find yourself standing at the open fridge, eating something you do not even taste. You are not hungry. You just need something. Then comes the guilt, and tomorrow the promise, and tomorrow night the fridge again.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls." (Proverbs 25:28)

Here is the line that changes everything. Self-control is listed as fruit of the Spirit, not fruit of the will. It grows out of a life connected to God; it is not squeezed out of a life gritting its teeth.

Then Paul tells you who you are. Your body is a temple: not a prison to punish, but a home bought at a price. You look after it, because Somebody lives there.

And Proverbs gives the picture. A city without walls is not wicked; it is simply open to anything. Self-control is the wall.

On an ordinary Tuesday, thank God before you eat, and mean it, because **"whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** (1 Corinthians 10:31) Before you reach for something, ask one honest question: am I hungry, or am I hurting? If you are hungry, eat and enjoy it; food is a gift. If you are hurting, take the hurting part to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, because for many of us the plate is doing a job that belongs to Him.

Shirley used to eat standing at the fridge every evening after the children were in bed. One night she made a cup of tea instead, sat down at the kitchen table, and read Psalm 23 slowly. She kept doing it, and discovered the hunger was mostly loneliness, and the Shepherd was better company than the fridge.

A word of care. If eating has become something that frightens you, or your health is at stake, see your doctor. And your body is not the measure of your worth; you are loved as you are, today.

Paul said even athletes are disciplined: **"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things."** (1 Corinthians 9:25)

The world's app: the next plan, the next promise, the next fresh start on Monday. It fails when it runs on shame, and shame burns out.

God's app: a Comforter who is actually a Person, and a self-control that grows from the inside, so that food goes back to being food.

Speak this: My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and self-control is growing in me as His fruit.

When the Comforter has the hurting part, food can go back to being food.

CHAPTER 23

Sleep and Rest

Some people are tired because they are carrying the wrong load. Some are lying awake at three in the morning, staring at the ceiling, running tomorrow's meeting for the fortieth time.

A tired Christian makes bad decisions and hears God poorly. Rest is not laziness. God built it into the week before there was any sin to recover from. **"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."** (Genesis 2:2) God was not tired. He was setting the rhythm.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep." (Psalm 127:2)

"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." (Psalm 4:8)

Think about a yoke. It was a wooden frame laid across two oxen pulling a plough together. If a young, weak ox was hitched beside a big, seasoned one, which one did the heavy pulling? The strong one. When Jesus says, "Take My yoke," He is not loading you with more religious baggage. He is inviting you to hitch yourself to Him. You stop dragging your soul through life like a

shopping trolley with one wheel missing, and start walking in step with His rhythm of grace.

Psalm 127 is blunt about the striving. All that early rising and late sitting, and the bread you are eating is the bread of sorrows. Meanwhile He gives His beloved sleep, as a gift. And Psalm 4:8 shows why David could sleep: not because everything was sorted, but because the Lord alone made him safe.

In an ordinary week, keep one day that is different. God said, **"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God."** (Exodus 20:9-10) Before bed, pray a handover prayer: give Him the day, the people, the problems, by name. Put the phone out of the bedroom. And when you cannot sleep, do not fight the ceiling. Talk to your Father. He is awake anyway. If sleeplessness goes on and on, see your doctor too.

Nigel was a self-employed builder who had not taken a day off in three years. He called it providing. His wife called it absence. When he finally kept a Sabbath, the first one felt like guilt. By the third it felt like being given back to the people he loved.

The world's app: more hours, more caffeine, and sleep when you are dead. It fails because you are a creature, not a machine, and creatures wear out.

God's app: a rhythm He set, a yoke He shares, and a safety you can actually lie down inside.

Speak this: I lie down in peace and sleep, for the Lord alone makes me dwell in safety.

God gives His beloved sleep, and He has never once asked to borrow your night shift.

CHAPTER 24

Lack and Provision

There is a particular kind of fear that comes at about two in the morning with a number attached to it. The rent. The electricity. The car that made that noise again. You add it up in the dark, and the sum never comes out right.

God has an answer for that number.

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread." (Psalm 37:25)

Read the measure in that first verse carefully. Not according to your income, or the economy, or what the bank thinks of you. According to His riches, which is a warehouse that has never once been audited and found low. And notice the word "all". Not your wants, your needs, all of them.

Then David, the shepherd boy who became king, says the simplest thing in the Bible: "I shall not want." A shepherd is responsible for his sheep. Sheep do not organise their own grass. The Lord takes that job on Himself.

And Psalm 37:25 is an old man's testimony. He has watched a lifetime of good years and bad, and he has never seen God's people abandoned. That is decades of evidence.

God's supply often arrives by strange postmen. In a famine He told Elijah, "**I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.**" (1 Kings 17:4) Later He sent him to a widow with one last handful of flour, and "**the bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD.**" (1 Kings 17:16) Ravens and a widow. God is not limited to your payslip.

On an ordinary Tuesday, write the need down. Pray it specifically, by amount and by date. Then do your part: look for work, ask for help, make a budget, sell what you do not need. Provision usually comes through diligence, not instead of it. Give something anyway, even if it is small, because "**he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**" (2 Corinthians 9:6) And thank Him out loud for yesterday's provision before you ask for tomorrow's.

Dennis was between jobs with three children and a pile of bills. One evening he spread the electricity bill on the kitchen table, gathered the children round, and they prayed over it together. When it was paid, he wrote the date on the back. He did that with every bill until he found work. Those papers became a family record of God's faithfulness, and his children have never forgotten them.

"Those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing."
(Psalm 34:10)

The world's app: hustle, borrow, worry. It fails because a person working from panic makes poor decisions, and panic never runs out on its own.

God's app: a Shepherd who is responsible for the sheep, so that you work hard from peace instead of hard from fear.

Speak this: My God supplies all my need according to His riches in glory, and I shall not want.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Heaven's warehouse has never once been audited and found short.

CHAPTER 25

Debt

You know the feeling when certain envelopes stay face down on the mat. You move money from card to card and call it managing. Debt is not only a financial condition. It is a spiritual one, because it quietly transfers who you serve.

"The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." (Proverbs 22:7)

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8)

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much." (Luke 16:10)

Solomon is describing a relationship. Whatever you owe, you serve, and you feel it in your freedom to obey God before you feel it in your bank account.

Paul gives the goal: owe no one anything except love. Love is the only debt you are meant to carry for life.

And Jesus gives you the way out, and it is unglamorous. Faithful in the least. Not a windfall, a habit. Small, boring faithfulness is how God moves people from bondage into room to breathe.

Look at the widow in 2 Kings 4. Her creditor was coming to take her sons. God did a miracle with a jar of oil, but notice how He did it. She had to borrow empty vessels and pour, and then the prophet said, **"Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest."** (2 Kings 4:7) God provided, she worked, and the debt was paid. Not a magic cancellation, but a

faithful God and a faithful pair of hands.

Watch out for the shortcuts. **"Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase."**

(Proverbs 13:11) The scheme, the lottery, the bet to win it all back: quick riches end in chasing losses.

And pay your taxes with honour. When they showed Jesus a coin, He said, **"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."** (Matthew 22:21) The coin bears Caesar's image, so hand the metal back. But you bear the image of the living God, so give yourself to Him.

On an ordinary Tuesday, list every debt on one sheet. Stop adding to it. If you are married, tell your spouse everything; hidden debt poisons a marriage. Make a shared budget. Pay off the smallest or most expensive first. See a free debt adviser. Keep giving a little, even now. And thank God out loud every time one is closed.

Gary had six credit cards and a secret. The evening he laid every statement on the table in front of his wife was the worst evening of the year. It was also the first night in two years that he slept properly. Card by card, they cleared it together, in the light.

The world's app: more credit, and a bigger loan to cover the last one. It fails for a reason a child could see.

God's app: honest faithfulness with what is in your hand, generosity that refuses to wait until you are comfortable, and a God who honours both.

Speak this: I serve God and not the lender, and I am faithful with what is in my hand today.

You cannot borrow your way out of borrowing.

CHAPTER 26

Work, Employers and Bosses

Most Christians spend more waking hours at work than anywhere else, and many have never once thought of it as a place of worship. Work is where your faith gets tested, far more often than on a Sunday.

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."
(Colossians 3:23-24)

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh." (1 Peter 2:18)

"Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men."
(Proverbs 22:29)

That first verse quietly changes your employer. You may report to a difficult man, but you are working for Somebody else, and He notices what your manager never sees.

Peter's word is hard, and it is meant to be. Good work for a kind boss is easy. Good work for a harsh one is where the light shines. This is not about putting up with abuse; it is about refusing to let a bad manager decide what kind of worker you will be.

And excellence has a doorway attached to it. Solomon says the excellent man will stand before kings. Look at Joseph. Sold as a slave, he ended up running Potiphar's house; thrown into prison, he ended up running the prison. **"The LORD was with him;**

and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper." (Genesis 39:23) Excellent wherever he was put, and in the end he stood before Pharaoh.

Keep your integrity in the small things. **"Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight."**

(Proverbs 11:1) Do not fiddle the hours or pad the expenses. And never trade your body or your conscience for a promotion.

Whatever you get by compromise, you will have to compromise to keep. Find honourable ways to rise.

If you are being cheated, God has noticed. James says the wages kept back by fraud cry out, and **"the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."** (James 5:4) Speak up through proper channels, and leave the rest with Him.

On an ordinary Tuesday, pray on the way in. Do the task in front of you as if Jesus were checking it, because He is. Respect your boss's position even when you cannot respect his choices. And go home on time when you can; your family is part of your calling too.

Janice was a care assistant with a manager who took the credit for everything. Then she made a decision: she would do the night rounds as if Jesus were the one reading the charts in the morning. Nothing changed about her manager. Everything changed about her nights, and in time the families began asking for her by name.

The world's app: do the minimum, or grind yourself to nothing for a promotion. One steals from your employer; the other steals from your family.

God's app: excellent work offered as worship, which makes you both a better employee and a free man.

Speak this: I work heartily as to the Lord today, and He is the One who rewards me.

Your manager signs the payslip, but Jesus signs the review.

CHAPTER 27

Laziness and Procrastination

The job is right there. The form, the phone call, the conversation you need to have. And somehow you find yourself alphabetising the spice rack instead. Putting things off is rarely about time. It is usually about fear wearing a comfortable coat: fear of failing, fear of doing it badly, fear of finding out it is harder than you hoped.

"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6-8)

"The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." (Proverbs 13:4)

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

God sends us to school with an insect. The ant has no supervisor, no foreman and no deadline, and still gets the harvest in. She simply does the next thing, in season.

Proverbs 13 is a sharp little verse. The lazy man is not short of desire. He wants the fit body, the finished book, the better job. He just has nothing, because wanting and doing are not the same organ. **"He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich."** (Proverbs 10:4) And Ecclesiastes gives the cure, which is wonderfully small. Whatever your hand finds. Not your five-year plan. What is in front of you, now.

Procrastination has a cost that creeps up slowly. "**A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man.**" (Proverbs 6:10-11) Nobody plans to waste a year. They just waste a Tuesday, then another. There is always a reason not to start today: too cold, too tired, not ready. Meanwhile the season passes.

It is not only work we put off. We put off obeying God. We hear a sermon, nod, and do nothing. James calls that deceiving ourselves (James 1:22). Knowing is not the same as doing.

On an ordinary Tuesday, do the first five minutes of the job you are avoiding. Just five. Break the big job into pieces small enough to start. Tell someone your deadline so it is real. Turn off the time-wasters for one hour. And start before you feel like it, because you probably never will.

Kevin was a student with an essay due in nine days. He cleaned his whole flat rather than write a sentence. On day seven, panicking, he made himself sit down and write one bad paragraph. Just one, and it was dreadful. But it broke the spell. By the end of the evening he had two pages, and he found that the dread had been much bigger than the job.

The world's app: motivation. Wait until you feel like it, then go. It fails because feelings follow action far more reliably than they lead it.

God's app: whatever your hand finds: what is in front of you, now, at whatever size. Do that with your might, as to the Lord, and the rest follows.

Speak this: What my hand finds to do today, I will do it now, and with my might.

Feelings follow feet; start walking and they will catch up.

CHAPTER 28

Greed and the Love of Money

The new phone is exciting for about a week. Then the advert appears, and something in you whispers, "If I just had that, then I would be settled." People will sacrifice health, family and integrity for shiny things they do not need.

"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
(Luke 12:15)

"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
(Matthew 6:19-21)

The verse everyone half-remembers does not say money is the root of all evil. It says something more uncomfortable: **"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."** (1 Timothy 6:10)

The love of money is the problem, and a poor man can love it as fiercely as a rich one.

Your life is not the sum of your stuff. You are not defined by the badge on your car or the label inside your jacket.

Paul says contentment is gain. Greed is a man trying to build a future he does not believe God will provide. Contentment is trust, and Paul says it is learned (Philippians 4:11).

And Jesus tells you where your heart is: it follows your treasure. Tie your treasure to the markets and your peace will rise and fall with every wobble. Then He makes it plain: **"No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and mammon."** (Matthew 6:24)

Think of the rich man who built bigger barns. God said to him, **"Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?"** (Luke 12:20) You have never seen a hearse pulling a moving trailer. So live with open hands.

On an ordinary Tuesday, before you buy, ask, "Do I need this, or do I need to feel something?" And give, on purpose and regularly, because **"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom."** (Luke 6:38)

Victor bought a bigger car every two years and felt exactly the same. One year God nudged him to give a serious sum to a struggling family in his church. He did it, and something broke in him that day that no purchase had ever touched. Money stopped being his master and became his tool.

The world's app: a little more. It fails because a little more is a moving target.

God's app: contentment grounded in a Person, and giving, which is the only thing that actually breaks money's grip.

Speak this: I serve God, not money, and I lay up my treasure in heaven.

A little more has never once stood still long enough to be caught.

PART FOUR

Relationships

CHAPTER 29

Marriage

Glen and Heather had been married twenty-two years. Nobody had shouted. Nobody had packed a bag. They shared a house and a calendar, and not much else. One evening Heather said quietly, "We're flatmates who used to be in love." Glen had no answer, because she was right.

Most marriages do not fail in a storm. They fail slowly, in a hundred small unsaid things. And God's instructions are aimed precisely at the small things.

"And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.'" (Matthew 19:4-6)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." (Ephesians 5:25)

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Look at who did the joining. Not the registrar, not even the two of you. God joined you. Our culture treats marriage like a lease

you can break when someone more convenient walks in. Jesus re-anchors it to the Architect's original drawing. It is a covenant, and covenant commitment overrules passing moods.

Then Ephesians sets the bar for husbands, and the bar is not "be nice". It is Calvary. Christ gave Himself for a church that was not yet lovely. Men, you go first. And to both of you: **"let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."** (Ephesians 5:33)

And 1 Corinthians 13 is not a wedding reading. It is a list of things you do on a Tuesday when nobody says thank you.

Watch the small things. **"Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines."** (Song of Solomon 2:15) Most affairs start as an emotional bond: a colleague who listens while your spouse gets the leftovers. Talk to each other before you vent to anyone else. Meet each other's needs (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). And if you are stuck, a good Christian counsellor is a gift, not a defeat.

"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." (Hebrews 13:4)

The world's app: stay while it works and leave when it stops. It fails because it turns a covenant into a contract, and nobody has ever felt safe inside a contract.

God's app: a promise that holds the marriage steady while the feelings go up and down, which they will. Glen took Ephesians 5:25 personally and went first. He suggested a walk every Saturday morning with no phones. Six months later Heather said, "I've got my husband back."

Speak this: What God has joined together, I will not let anything separate, and I will go first.

A contract asks what you will give me; a covenant asks what I will give you.

CHAPTER 30

Singleness and Waiting for a Spouse

Imogen was thirty-four and had been a bridesmaid eleven times. She knew the aunt who would whisper, "Your turn next, love." Then she drove home to a quiet flat and said the sentence she had been saying for years: "When my life starts..."

If that is you, hear this clearly. Some contemporary churches have treated singleness as a waiting room. God does not.

"Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4)

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD." (Proverbs 18:22)

"He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:32)

Psalm 37 is often treated like a vending machine: put in some delight, press the button, collect one spouse. It is not that. Delight yourself in Him and the wanting itself gets reshaped. You begin to want what He wants for you, and His wants for you are better than yours.

Proverbs reminds you that marriage is good. God is not against your longing; He put it there. But notice that Paul, writing to the Corinthians, is not consoling single people. He says there is a freedom in it that married people do not have, and he means it as an advantage. Jesus lived single and whole. So did Paul. Nobody would call their lives on hold.

So use the season. **"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."** (Ecclesiastes 3:1) A season, not

a sentence. Deal with your past now, because old habits do not vanish at the altar; bring them to the cross before you carry them into a marriage. Build now the habits you will want in a home: prayer, honesty, keeping your word.

Here is your ordinary Tuesday. Serve somewhere now. Build real friendships now. Do not date anyone you would not want to become. **"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers."** (2 Corinthians 6:14) Pray specifically for the person God has for you, and then leave the timing in His hands. When Abraham's servant went looking for a wife for Isaac, he prayed, kept walking, and afterwards said, **"As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me."** (Genesis 24:27) Notice he was on the way. God leads people who are moving.

The world's app: settle, or keep shopping. Grab whoever is available before it is too late, or keep swiping in case somebody better turns up. One costs you your peace for forty years; the other never lets you land anywhere.

God's app: a full life now, not a paused one, and the trust to let Him do the finding. Imogen stopped saying "when my life starts". She started a youth group on Tuesday evenings for the teenage girls in her church. Within a year she had nineteen of them and more joy than she had known in a decade. She is still praying for a husband. She is just not waiting to live. **"He has made everything beautiful in its time."** (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Speak this: My life is not on pause. I delight in the Lord today, and I trust Him with the timing.

Single is not a waiting room; it is a room with a door God holds the key to.

CHAPTER 31

Raising Children

Lorraine was a single mum with three children, two jobs and one car that made a noise she tried not to think about. Every time she heard a preacher talk about "family devotions", she felt a fresh wave of guilt. Most nights she was glad if everyone found both shoes.

If you are a parent, you know the swing. Too soft on Monday because you are too tired to fight; exploding over spilt juice on Tuesday because you have had enough of everything. God's Word offers a better way: steady, loving instruction.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

Notice the order in Deuteronomy. First, these words shall be in your heart. Then you teach them. You cannot hand your children a faith you are not living. They will take what they see long before they take what they are told.

Now look at where the teaching happens. Sitting, walking, lying down, rising up. Not a class. A kitchen table, a car journey, a

bedtime. Lorraine read that and laughed out loud. "The school run," she said. "That's my pulpit." Twenty minutes in the car every morning, and a mother who started asking, "What do you think God would say about that?"

"Train up" is steady work. **"Chasten your son while there is hope."** (Proverbs 19:18) Discipline with love and firmness, and be consistent, so a child knows the same thing will happen today as happened yesterday. But do not crush them. **"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."** (Colossians 3:21) Say "well done" as often as you say "stop that". Never compare one child with another. And when you get it wrong, apologise to your child. Nothing teaches repentance like watching a parent do it.

Guard their minds, too. Screens are teaching them all day long, so set limits, know what they are watching and offer them better things. Watch their friendships, because **"evil company corrupts good habits."** (1 Corinthians 15:33) And above all, treasure them. **"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD."** (Psalm 127:3)

The world's app: let them decide for themselves when they are older. It sounds open-minded. It fails because the world is not waiting. It is discipling your children right now, every day, for free.

God's app: deliberate, unhurried, everyday training from a parent who is clearly following Someone himself. One verse at breakfast. One question in the car. One prayer at bedtime. Ask God for wisdom every morning, and He will give it. Lorraine never did get a family devotions slot on the calendar. She got something better: three children who talk about Jesus as naturally as they talk about lunch.

Speak this: My home is God's classroom, and my children will see Jesus in me today.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Children rarely do what we say, but they almost always become what we are.

CHAPTER 32

Honouring Parents

Ivan had not phoned his father in eight years. There had been no single great explosion, just a long list of disappointments: promises broken, birthdays forgotten, a sharp tongue that never once said sorry. But every time he read the Ten Commandments, one of them sat on his chest like a stone.

This is the first commandment with a promise attached, and it is harder for some people than anyone admits from a pulpit.

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you."
(Exodus 20:12)

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise." (Ephesians 6:1-2)

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8)

Honour is not agreement, and it is not pretending. You can honour a parent who failed you. Honour is about how you speak to them and about them, and how you carry them. God is not asking you to say the bad years were good. He is asking you not to treat your parents with contempt.

For the young reader still at home, Ephesians is plain: obey.

"Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." (Colossians 3:20)

For the grown-up reader, honour changes shape but never expires. In Jesus' day some religious men had found a clever loophole. They would declare their money "Corban", dedicated to God, and then tell their ageing parents there was nothing left for them. Jesus tore that excuse to pieces (Matthew 15:4-6). That is why the apostle Paul makes care for ageing parents a matter of faith itself, not of sentiment. **"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old."** (Proverbs 23:22)

And look at Jesus on the cross. He looked down and made sure His mother would be cared for: **"Woman, behold your son!"** (John 19:26) Honour to the very last breath.

A gentle word if your parent was abusive. Honour does not require you to put yourself in harm's way. You can refuse to curse them, refuse to speak of them with hatred, forgive them and pray for them, and still keep a locked door.

The world's app: cut them off, or stay a child forever. Neither is honour. One is a wound left open; the other never lets you become an adult.

God's app: honour that costs you something, forgiveness where it is needed, and care when their strength goes. Ivan prayed for a week and then dialled the number. The first call lasted four minutes and was mostly about the weather. His father did not apologise. But at the end he said, "Ring again, son." Ivan did. It was the beginning of honour, and the stone on his chest began to lift. God attached a promise to this command for a reason: there is life on the other side of obedience.

Speak this: I will honour my father and my mother, in my words, in my care and in my prayers.

You can honour a parent without pretending; honour is how you carry them, not how you rewrite them.

CHAPTER 33

Friendship and Betrayal

Natalie had told her closest friend something she had never told anyone, something painful about her family, over coffee and tears. Three weeks later, at a dinner party, she heard it repeated across the table as a funny story. Natalie drove home shaking and said to herself, "That's it. I'm never trusting anybody again."

Being let down by a friend hurts in a place that a stranger cannot reach. And Jesus knows the exact temperature of that pain.

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17)

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." (Proverbs 27:6)

"Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9)

Start with that third verse. David wrote it, and on the last night before the cross Jesus quoted it about Judas (John 13:18).

Betrayal is not a sign that you were foolish to trust. It happened to the only perfect man who ever lived. He washed Judas's feet and was sold by him for thirty pieces of silver. If you have been betrayed, you are in very good company.

Now the first verse. That is what a real friend looks like: one who loves at all times, not only when it is convenient, and who turns up when things fall apart. Jonathan was that to David. And there is One who is that to you: **"there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."**(Proverbs 18:24)

The second verse turns friendship upside down. A friend who wounds you with the truth is worth ten who flatter you. So be that friend, and value that friend.

Here is the ordinary-Tuesday wisdom. Choose your friends carefully: **"He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed."** (Proverbs 13:20) Learn that a true friend can say no. You are not responsible for everybody's emotions, and rescuing people from every consequence of their own choices is not love. Say your no kindly: **"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt."** (Colossians 4:6)

When you are wounded, the command is clear: **"bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."** (Colossians 3:13) Forgiving is not the same as handing back the keys. You can forgive completely and still be wise about who you trust with what.

The world's app: trust nobody again. It fails because it punishes every future friend for what one person did, and it leaves you alone, which was the enemy's aim all along.

God's app: forgive, be wise about who gets the keys, and stay open, because a brother is born for adversity and yours may not have arrived yet. Natalie forgave her friend. She stopped sharing secrets with her, and she was gracious to her. But she did not stop having friends. Two years later, when her mother was ill, it was a woman from her house group, someone she had barely known, who sat with her in the hospital every evening.

Speak this: Jesus is the friend who sticks closer than a brother. I forgive, I choose wisely, and I stay open.

One Judas is no reason to sack all eleven.

CHAPTER 34

Conflict and How to Handle It

Stuart and another man on the church committee had not spoken to each other in a year. The cause? The car park. Words were said at a meeting, and then many more, to everybody except each other. By the end of the year half the congregation had picked a side, and nobody could remember what the original argument had been.

Most church and family trouble would die in a week if people did the one thing Jesus actually told them to do.

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." (Matthew 18:15)

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18)

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

Go, and go alone. Not to the group chat, or to five friends under the pious cover of a "prayer request". That is gossip in its Sunday clothes. Almost every lasting division I have watched began with someone talking to everybody except the person concerned. And notice the goal. It is not "you have won the argument". It is "you have gained your brother". The aim is never vindication. It is getting your brother or sister back.

Romans 12 is realistic: as much as depends on you. You cannot force peace on someone who does not want it. But you can refuse to be the reason there is none.

And Matthew 5 is startling. Jesus says religious ritual means nothing to God if your heart is simmering with an unresolved quarrel. Leave your gift and make the phone call. **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."** (Matthew 5:9)

Here is your ordinary Tuesday. Before you text anyone else, text the person concerned and ask to meet. Start with your own part. Listen to understand, not to reload. Aim at the relationship, not the scoreboard. Deal with it early, too: **"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts."** (Proverbs 17:14) Skip the pointless online arguments; **"a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all."** (2 Timothy 2:24) Solomon adds, with a smile, that it is **"better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman."** (Proverbs 21:9)

Contentious men too.

The world's app: win the argument, or avoid it forever. One leaves a body on the floor; the other leaves a landmine in the ground.

God's app: go early, go privately, and go to make peace rather than to make a point. Stuart finally rang the other man and asked him for a coffee. He began with, "I'm sorry for my tone at that meeting. I was wrong." The other man's eyes filled up. They talked for two hours, and the car park did not matter any more.

Speak this: I will go to my brother, alone and early, to win him and not the argument.

Most feuds would die in a week if we told the person instead of the people.

CHAPTER 35

Gossip and the Tongue

Wendy was the woman everybody told everything to. People trusted her, and she liked being trusted, and somehow every piece of news in the church passed through her kitchen. "I'm only telling you so you can pray," she would say, and then she would tell you everything. One day she heard that a young couple had left the church because of something that had been said about them. Wendy went cold. She knew exactly where that story had travelled, because she had carried it.

We treat gossip as a small sin because it is a sociable one. God files it with the things that burn a life down.

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." (Proverbs 18:21)

"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases." (Proverbs 26:20)

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29)

Death and life. Not "mildly unhelpful" and "quite nice". Words always land somewhere. James says it plainly: **"See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"** (James 3:5)

Proverbs 26 is wonderfully simple. A fire needs fuel. Stop carrying wood and the fire goes out on its own, without a single sermon. You do not have to fix every quarrel; you just have to stop supplying the logs.

And Ephesians 4:29 gives you a test you can run in the half-second before you speak: does what I am about to say impart grace to the person hearing it? If not, it does not need saying.

The tongue has other sins too. Lying is one. In a world full of fine print and embellished stories, a disciple of Jesus must be transparently trustworthy. **"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'"** (Matthew 5:37) **"Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight."** (Proverbs 12:22) And truth itself can be used as a club. Being blunt is not the same as being honest. We are told to be **"speaking the truth in love."** (Ephesians 4:15)

Here is your ordinary Tuesday. Before you speak about someone who is not in the room, ask three questions. Is it true? Is it mine to tell? Will it build? If someone brings you wood, do not take it. Say kindly, "Have you talked to her about this?" And pray this every morning: **"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips."** (Psalm 141:3)

The world's app: everyone talks, it is harmless, it is just venting. It fails because words are never harmless, and the people you talked about are still living with what you handed them.

God's app: a mouth put under new management, speaking only what builds. Wendy went to the young couple and asked their forgiveness. Then she made a quiet decision: she would become the place where stories stopped. People still told her things. But nothing travelled any further than her kitchen, except to God in prayer.

Speak this: My tongue is under new management. I will speak life, and I will not carry wood.

A rumour dies the day it reaches a Christian who will not carry it.

Enemies and Persecution

When Ravi gave his life to Jesus, his family did not throw him out. They did something harder. They mocked him. Every meal became a performance. "Here comes the holy man." "Shall we wait while he prays to his imaginary friend?" Ravi went to bed most nights with his jaw aching from holding his tongue.

Sooner or later, following Jesus will cost you something. And some people will simply be against you: a colleague working to get you sacked, a neighbour who hates you, a relative who will never let it go.

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:44-45)

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:11-12)

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

Love. Bless. Do good. Pray. Four verbs, all aimed at the people least likely to deserve them. The world's default setting is retaliation. But the kingdom of God runs on a different currency. When you bless someone who just threw an insult at your head, you short-circuit the enemy's power grid.

Praying for someone who has genuinely hurt you is one of the strangest and most freeing things a human being can do. It does not excuse them. It gets you out from under them.

Then Jesus says something outrageous: when they speak evil of you because of Him, rejoice. Why? Because when the world attacks you for standing with Jesus, it is not a defeat. It is confirmation that you belong to another kingdom.

The law of the day let a Roman soldier press a civilian into carrying his pack for a mile. Jesus said, "**And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.**" (Matthew 5:41) Imagine the soldier's face when a disciple smiles at the marker and says, "I'll gladly take it another mile."

Romans 12 gives the practical shape: "**If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink.**" (Romans 12:20) And Jesus Himself, "**when He was reviled, did not revile in return ... but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.**" (1 Peter 2:23)

The world's app: retaliate, expose, destroy. It fails because it makes you into the thing you are fighting, and you cannot notice it happening from the inside.

God's app: blessing where a curse was expected. Ravi decided he would answer the mockery with service. Every night after the meal he quietly washed up for the whole family. He did not preach or sulk. He just kept washing. One night his older brother came and stood beside him at the sink, picked up a tea towel, and said, "Why do you keep doing this?" It was the first real conversation they had had in a year, and it was about Jesus.

Speak this: I will love, bless, do good and pray, and evil will not overcome me.

Nothing disarms an enemy like a blessing he did not see coming.

Forgiving the Unforgivable

Ingrid's brother was killed by a drunk driver on his way home from work. He was twenty-nine. The driver walked away with cuts and bruises and, after the trial, a sentence that felt like an insult. For three years she replayed the court case in her head every night. One Sunday the preacher talked about forgiveness, and Ingrid walked out in a fury. "He has no idea," she said. "Some things cannot be forgiven."

Some things done to people are monstrous, and telling them to forgive can sound like telling them it did not matter. It is not that.

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" (Matthew 18:21-22)

"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.'" (Luke 23:34)

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15)

Peter thought he was being remarkably generous. Seven times! Jesus answered with a number that shattered his calculations: four hundred and ninety. But Jesus was not telling Peter to keep a ledger until offence number 491. He was telling him to stop keeping the book at all. Throw away your emotional calculator.

Then Jesus told the story of a servant forgiven a debt he could never repay, who went straight out and choked a fellow servant over a few coins (Matthew 18:23-35). You have been forgiven an unpayable debt at the cross.

The second verse was said out loud by a man being executed, while it was happening. That is the standard, and it is also the proof that it can be done.

Now hear what forgiveness is not. It is not saying it was acceptable. It is not the same as trust, and it does not mean putting yourself back within reach of someone who is still dangerous. Reconciliation needs repentance on both sides; forgiveness only needs yours. And it is usually a decision you have to make more than once.

Joseph is the great example. His brothers sold him into slavery. Years later he told them, **"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good."** (Genesis 50:20) Then he fed them and their children.

The world's app: they must earn it, or you must forget it. One waits forever; the other is not possible. Either way, you stay chained to him.

God's app: release the debt to a Judge who will deal with it perfectly, and walk out of the cell. Jesus came **"to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."** (Isaiah 61:1) Ingrid did not forgive in one prayer. She forgave in a hundred prayers, often through gritted teeth: "Lord, I release him to You again today." Then one evening she noticed something. She had not rehearsed the court case in a week.

Speak this: I throw away the calculator. I release this debt to God, and I walk free.

Forgiveness unlocks a cell, and the one who walks out is you.

CHAPTER 38

Loving the Unlovely

Every Sunday the same man slipped into the back row of Douglas's church just after the first hymn. His coat was filthy, he smelled of drink, and he left before the final prayer so nobody had to speak to him. Nobody did. Douglas was the churchwarden, and he did the same as everyone else for two years.

It is easy to love people who are like us. The gospel gets interesting at the edges.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" (Matthew 25:40)

"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you." (Luke 14:13-14)

Look at the measuring stick in the first verse. Not "love them as you love yourself", but "as I have loved you". That raises the bar past anything you can manage on goodwill. The world will not recognise us by our bumper stickers or our clever arguments online. It will know us by our practical, costly love.

The second verse is the most surprising address in the Bible. The awkward, the difficult, the smelly, the ungrateful: whatever you

do to them, you did to Him. When you hand a cup of tea to the man nobody wants to sit next to, you are handing it to Jesus.

And the third turns our social habits upside down. Human networking says, "Invite people who can return the favour." Jesus says, "Invite people who cannot possibly pay you back." Open your home, your table and your diary to the overlooked.

John does not let us off: **"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar."** (1 John 4:20) **"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble."** (James 1:27) And there is no room for racism or little cliques in His family, because **"God shows no partiality."** (Acts 10:34)

Here is your ordinary Tuesday. Name the one person who makes you sigh when they walk in. This week, do one practical kindness for them, and tell nobody.

The world's app: tolerance. It fails because tolerance only means you will put up with someone, and that is as far as it can go.

God's app: love that goes first and does not wait for the other person to become lovely, because that is exactly what was done for you. One Sunday Douglas walked to the back row, shook the man's hand and said, "Come and sit with me." He sat beside him at the front for the whole service, smell and all. Over the next year Douglas bought him breakfast most Sundays and drove him to his recovery programme. Two winters later that same man was handing out hymn books at the door.

Speak this: I will love the way Jesus loved me: first, freely, and to the edges.

Nobody was ever healed by being put up with.

PART FIVE

Direction

CHAPTER 39

Decisions and Wisdom

Priya was a nurse with two job offers on the table and a spreadsheet with forty rows. She had even colour-coded it. She had asked eleven people for their opinion and received fourteen opinions. Every night she lay awake running the numbers again, terrified of making the wrong choice and ruining the next ten years.

Most of us want God to show us the next ten years. He tends to light the next step, and there is a reason for that.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Start with James. "Without reproach" means He does not sigh when you ask. And "liberally" pictures a man throwing it out with both hands. You only have to ask, and keep on asking.

Proverbs 3 tells you where the weight goes. Your logic is a gift, but it is limited; it cannot see round the corner. Lean on Him with your whole weight. And "in all your ways acknowledge Him" means bring Him into every part of the decision, not just the bit you are stuck on. When you do, He directs. **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with**

My eye." (Psalm 32:8)

Then the lamp. A lamp at the feet lights one step. It is God keeping you walking with Him instead of running ahead with a map. His Word is your GPS, but it speaks one turn at a time.

God also uses people. **"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety."**

(Proverbs 11:14)

Here is your ordinary Tuesday. Write the decision down. Ask God by name. Look for what Scripture already says, because many decisions are settled there. Ask two mature believers who love you enough to be honest. Check for His peace (there is more on that in the chapter on Hearing God). Then take the step you can see. And if you are frightened of getting it wrong, remember that God can redeem even your mistakes.

The world's app: gather more information and ask more people. It fails because information does not love you and cannot tell you what tomorrow holds.

God's app: ask, then obey the bit you can already see. Priya closed the spreadsheet and prayed James 1:5 out loud. Then she asked just two people: her pastor and her mother. Both asked her the same question: "Which one are you afraid of?" She burst into tears, because she knew. The decision had been obvious for days. She had simply been afraid of it. She took the harder job, and never regretted it.

Speak this: I ask God for wisdom, and He gives it to me. I will take the step I can see.

God rarely hands you the map, but He never fails to light the next step.

CHAPTER 40

Purpose: What Am I Here For?

Connor had a good job, a nice car and a holiday booked. But on Sunday evenings a question kept surfacing: "Is this it? What am I actually for?"

The question often arrives at about forty, though plenty of twenty-somethings feel it too.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39)

You are not an accident. The word behind "workmanship" is the one we get "poem" from. And notice what Ephesians does not say. It does not say God will show you a purpose one day. It says the works were prepared beforehand and you are to walk in them. Purpose is discovered by moving, not by sitting still waiting for a sign.

Jeremiah shows the heart behind it. God's thoughts toward you are peace, not evil; a future and a hope. **"All things were created through Him and for Him."** (Colossians 1:16) You

will never find your purpose apart from the One you were made for.

And Jesus sums up the whole thing in two great commands. Every command in Scripture hangs on these two hinges.

Solomon tried everything else first. His conclusion: "**Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.**" (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Think of a phone with a hundred apps open. It looks productive, but the battery drains fast. When God is not first, everything starts pulling power from the wrong place. Close the extra tabs and get your life back.

Here is your ordinary Tuesday. Start with what is already in your hand: your gifts, your people, your time. "**As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another.**" (1 Peter 4:10) Ask God which piece of His work is in front of you this week, and do it. You do not need a bigger stage to start. David simply "**served his own generation by the will of God.**" (Acts 13:36)

The world's app: find yourself. It fails because there is not enough in any of us to build a life's meaning on.

God's app: lose yourself in something He is doing, and find out who you were the whole time. Connor's church needed volunteers to teach refugees English. He went along one Saturday morning and was paired with a man in his fifties who had been a teacher in his own country and could not yet read a bus timetable here. Week by week the man learned. And somewhere between the alphabet cards and the cups of tea, the Sunday-evening question went quiet. Connor knew what he was for.

Speak this: I am God's workmanship. I will walk in the good works He prepared for me, starting today.

There is a hole in the world the shape of you, and God cut it on purpose.

Discouragement in Ministry

Every person who has served God for any length of time has wanted to quit, usually on a Monday. The chairs are stacked, the people you poured yourself into have drifted away, and you are sitting in the car park wondering whether any of it mattered. I have sat in that car park more times than I could tell you. If that is you this morning, you are in good company, and you are not finished.

Malcolm was a lay pastor of a congregation of nineteen. Every January he read the growth statistics, and every February he wrote a letter of resignation. Then one February an envelope came with a prison postmark, from a man he had visited eleven years earlier. "You came every week," the man wrote. "Nobody else did. I am a deacon now." Malcolm put the resignation letter in the bin and kept the other one in his Bible.

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." (Galatians 6:9)

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (Hebrews 6:10)

Look at the word "season" in Galatians. God puts the harvest on a calendar. The gap between sowing and reaping is not a sign that you sowed badly. It is a sign that it is not harvest yet. Farmers do

not dig up the seed on Wednesday to check whether it is working. The harvest is not cancelled by slow growth. It is only cancelled by quitting.

Corinthians gives you the word "knowing". Not hoping, not guessing. Your labour is not in vain, and you can know it even when you cannot see it. **"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."** (1 Corinthians 3:6) The increase was never on your job description.

And Hebrews is written for the one who feels unseen. God has not forgotten. Every cup of tea at a hospital bed, every Sunday school lesson to six fidgeting children, every hour of prayer nobody heard is written down.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, write down three people God has touched through you. Take your day off; Elijah needed sleep and food before he needed a sermon. Then go and plant again.

Nehemiah told his enemies, **"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."** (Nehemiah 6:3)

The world's app: measure the numbers. It fails because it makes visible results the judge, and God does not grade a servant by the size of the crowd.

God's app: faithfulness in season, rest when you need it, and the knowledge that not one hour of it was wasted. Finish the way the apostle Paul finished: **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."** (2 Timothy 4:7)

Speak this: My labour is not in vain in the Lord, and I will not lose heart before the harvest.

Heaven keeps the records, and not one hour of faithful work has gone missing.

CHAPTER 42

Doubt and Hard Questions

Tessa came home from her first term at university with a list. Her lecturer had raised questions about suffering and about whether God was really there, and she had written every one down and not slept properly for a month. She expected her grandfather to be shocked. He was not. He put the kettle on and said, "Let's take them one at a time, and let's take them to God."

Doubt is not the opposite of faith. Unbelief is. God is not frightened of your questions. Here is His app.

"Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" (Mark 9:24)

"Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.'" (John 20:27)

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

That first verse is one of the most honest sentences in the Bible, and Jesus healed the man's son anyway. Jesus does call us to a faith that does not doubt. But the road to that faith very often begins with this father's prayer.

When Thomas would not believe without evidence, Jesus did not shame him. He came back into the room and offered him His hands. Then He added a word for you and me: **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** (John 20:29)

And Romans 8:28 is the answer for the hardest question of all: why do bad things happen? It does not say all things are good. It says all things work together for good. Think of God as the Master Weaver. From underneath, the tapestry is knots and loose threads. From above, it is a picture. You are seeing the underside, and He is working from the top.

The Bible is full of people who asked God hard questions out loud. Habakkuk began, "**O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear?**" (Habakkuk 1:2) Three chapters later he was rejoicing in the God of his salvation (Habakkuk 3:17-18). He did not get every answer. He got God, and that was better.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, write the question down and pray it, honestly. Read one Gospel slowly, a chapter a day, and watch what Jesus does with doubters. Ask a mature believer, the way Tessa asked her grandfather. And keep obeying what you do know while you wait on what you do not. He is the God "**who cannot lie**" (Titus 1:2).

The world's app: abandon the faith, or bury the question and never mention it. One throws out the treasure; the other rots quietly underneath.

God's app: bring the question to Him out loud, and keep feeding on the Word while you wait. Tessa still has the notebook. Some questions have answers written beside them now. The rest she has learned to carry to Him.

Speak this: Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. You cannot lie, and I will trust You with my questions.

Doubt is faith with a question in its hand; bring the question to Him and keep the faith.

CHAPTER 43

Waiting on God

Waiting is the part nobody volunteers for, and it is where most of the real work gets done in a person. We live with next-day delivery and instant downloads, and then we pray about something that matters and God seems to have put us on hold with the music playing.

Derek prayed for his brother for eleven years. His brother laughed at him and once walked out of a family dinner. Derek kept praying, kept visiting, and kept the Sunday lunch invitation open, every single week. In the twelfth year his brother turned up on a Sunday morning, not for lunch but for church, and sat at the back with his arms folded. By Easter he had unfolded them.

"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

"Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Psalm 27:14)

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

(Habakkuk 2:3)

Habakkuk gives you the key word: appointed. There is a time already fixed, even when you cannot see it on the calendar.

Notice the order in Isaiah: mount up, run, walk. It finishes with walking, because most of the Christian life is walking and not

fainting, and that takes more strength than flying. The weary person who waits on the Lord is not sitting idle; he is being filled up while he stands still.

David knew what he was talking about. He was anointed king as a boy and then spent years hiding in caves. Joseph waited thirteen years between the dream and the palace. Abraham and Sarah got tired of waiting and took a shortcut through Hagar (Genesis 16), and that shortcut brought years of heartache into the tent.

Do you pray and nothing happens? Jesus said, "**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**" (Matthew 7:7) The tense means keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. God is not a reluctant neighbour annoyed by your doorbell; He is a Father who loves to open the door.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, keep asking. Keep serving where you are, because waiting on God is like a waiter waiting on a table: busy, not idle. Prepare as though it is coming. And refuse the shortcut, however reasonable it looks. "**The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.**"

(Lamentations 3:25)

The world's app: make it happen now. It fails because forcing a door open early usually breaks the thing you were carrying through it.

God's app: active waiting, serving, preparing and believing, while the appointed time comes to you. "**I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope.**" (Psalm 130:5)

Speak this: I will wait on the Lord and keep on knocking, because what He promised has an appointed day.

The delay is not God's neglect; it is the distance between the promise and its appointed day.

CHAPTER 44

Failure and Starting Again

Shona's business went under in the spring. It took her savings with it, and worse than the savings, it took her confidence. For months she could not walk past the empty shop without feeling sick. She told herself she had had her chance and wasted it. Then one morning she opened her Bible at Lamentations 3 and read it out loud at the kitchen table, and that was the morning she wrote a new plan.

Maybe yours was a marriage, an exam, a promise you broke, or a ministry you walked away from. The Bible is not a book about people who got it right. It is a book about people God kept using afterwards.

"For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again."
(Proverbs 24:16)

"Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" (John 21:15)

It is not that the righteous man never falls. It is that falling seven times does not disqualify him. Rising again is what marks him out.

Lamentations was written in the ruins of Jerusalem, by a man who had every reason to give up. And there, in the rubble, he

says God's mercies are new every morning. Not topped up. New. Yesterday's failure does not get carried onto today's ledger.

And then John 21. Peter had denied his Lord three times, with curses. If anybody had disqualified himself, it was Peter. Watch Jesus. He cooked Peter breakfast on the shore, and He did not interrogate him about his failure. He asked about his love. Three times, once for each denial. And when love was reaffirmed, He gave Peter a job: feed My sheep. The cure for paralysing guilt is to turn your eyes outward and start caring for others.

God is not looking for flawless people. He is looking for people who will get up. **"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand."** (Psalm 37:24)

So on an ordinary Tuesday, name the failure to God, plainly, with no excuses. Receive this morning's mercy; it is already there. Then do one thing forward today, however small. The apostle Paul put it like this: **"forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal."** (Philippians 3:13-14)

The world's app: you had your chance. It fails because it treats one bad chapter as the whole book.

God's app: mercy in the morning and a goal in front of you. He even promises, **"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten."** (Joel 2:25) Shona's new plan was smaller than the old one, and wiser. She opened a market stall, and she prayed over it every morning.

Speak this: When I fall, I will arise. His mercies are new this morning, and I am pressing forward.

Falling is what you did; getting up is who you are.

CHAPTER 45

Success and Staying Humble

Here is a problem most people would love to have: things are going well. The promotion came through, the business is growing, the ministry is full. But I will tell you what I have seen in forty-five years of ministry. More people are ruined by their success than by their failure, because failure sends you to your knees and success does not.

Ronan was promoted to manager at twenty-eight, over men twice his age. He knew how easily it could go to his head, so he made himself a rule. Every Monday morning, before the first meeting, he made the tea for his whole team. It was his way of reminding himself, every week, whose he was and what he was for.

"Then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth." (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

"Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28)

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Moses names the exact sentence that gets a blessed man into trouble, and it is not a wicked sentence. It is a forgetful one. My power, my hand. The cure is not self-loathing; it is memory.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

(James 1:17)

Do you want to be the boss? Then be a servant. The world's model of leadership is a pyramid, with the boss at the top barking orders. In God's kingdom that pyramid is turned upside down. The greatest leader is the one who picks up a towel and washes feet. Jesus did it the night before the cross and then said, **"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."** (John 13:14)

Corinthians gives the warning. The man who thinks he stands is in the most danger, because he has stopped watching his feet. King Uzziah **"was marvelously helped till he became strong. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction."** (2 Chronicles 26:15-16)

So on an ordinary Tuesday, thank God out loud for the win before you tell anyone else. Give part of it away. Do one menial job this week that nobody will see. And let someone else do the praising: **"Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth."** (Proverbs 27:2)

The world's app: take the credit, because you earned it. It fails because it puts the whole weight of keeping your position onto the one set of shoulders least able to carry it.

God's app: deliberate remembering, deliberate thanking, deliberate giving away, so the blessing keeps moving through you instead of settling on you. **"He who humbles himself will be exalted."** (Matthew 23:12)

Speak this: Every good thing I have came from my Father. I will remember Him, thank Him, and serve.

Success forgets; humility remembers who gave the strength.

Ageing and the Second Half of Life

Edith was eighty-one and quite sure she had nothing left to give. Her knees were bad, her husband had been with the Lord for six years, and she sat at the back of church every Sunday thinking her useful days were behind her. Then a young mother sat down beside her after the service and said, "Would you teach me how to pray? You always look as if you know Him." They met every Thursday after that, at Edith's kitchen table, and by the end of the year there were four young mothers round it.

The world retires people. God does not. Some of the most important work in Scripture was done by people well past the age at which we hand out a carriage clock.

"They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing." (Psalm 92:14)

"Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." (Isaiah 46:4)

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Look at the word "still" in the Psalm. Still bear fruit. The tree does not stop producing because it has more rings in its trunk. The promise in Isaiah is that He carries. He does not hand you a stick and point at the hill. If you are frightened of getting older and becoming a burden, hear this: you were never meant to carry yourself in the first place.

And 2 Corinthians 4:16 is wonderfully honest. The outward is going down; God says so plainly. The inward is going up, day by day, and that is the part that lasts. Your knees may be older this year, but the person living inside them can be younger.

Moses was called at eighty. Caleb, at eighty-five, said, "**As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me ...**

Now therefore, give me this mountain." (Joshua 14:11-12)

Simeon and Anna, in their old age, were the ones who recognised the baby Jesus (Luke 2:25-38).

So on an ordinary Tuesday, pray the psalmist's prayer: "**Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation.**" (Psalm 71:18)

Then look for one younger person to pour into. Titus 2 tells older men and older women to teach the younger ones; the second half of life is for discipling. Look after your body too: see the doctor, take the medicine, do the exercises.

The world's app: hold on to youth as long as possible. It fails because it turns the second half of life into a defeat you are losing slowly.

God's app: fruit in old age, and a generation behind you that needs what only long years with God can teach. "**The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.**" (Proverbs 16:31)

Speak this: I will still bear fruit in old age. He carries me, and I will declare His strength to the next generation.

The world hands you a clock; God hands you the next generation.

PART SIX

The Enemy and the Unseen

Temptation

How many times have you promised, "I will never do that again," only to fall into the exact same ditch three days later? You meant it. Then the moment came, quietly, at the end of a long day, and the promise folded like paper.

Temptation is not always dramatic. Sometimes it is just a nudge, a shortcut, a secret habit, a little "nobody will know."

Jasper is a sales rep who spends four nights a week alone in hotels. So he made two habits. Every evening he prayed in the car park before he went into the hotel. And he texted his wife his room number. Those two habits have kept him for years.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11)

First, being tempted is not a sin. Jesus **"was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."** (Hebrews 4:15) What matters is what you do in the ninety seconds afterwards. Corinthians says your temptation is common: you are not uniquely filthy, whatever the enemy whispers. And there is always a way of escape, and it is there before you need it.

Second, watch and pray. Good intentions are never enough. Your spirit may want what is right, but your flesh is weak, and without steady, watchful prayer you will crumble under pressure. Think of a tiny crack in a windscreen. Ignore it long enough and the whole thing spreads. Prayer is not a ritual; it is maintenance.

Third, the Word hidden in your heart. Psalm 119 tells you when the work is done: hidden, past tense, before the moment. When the devil came to Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus answered him three times with "**It is written**" (Matthew 4:4), out of a Word He already had.

James shows you how sin works: "**each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.**" (James 1:14-15) Catch it at the thought, before it conceives.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, know your weak hour and your weak place. Pray before you walk into them, not after. Find the exit before you need it, and tell someone you trust. Learn one verse this week for the thing that trips you most.

The world's app: follow your heart. It fails for the simplest reason of all: that is not an app, it is the virus.

God's app: look for the exit with the Word already loaded, and run to the One who knows the fight. "**For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**" (Hebrews 2:18)

Speak this: God is faithful. There is a way of escape, and I will take it. His Word is hidden in my heart.

Look for the exit before you look at the bait.

Spiritual Attack and Oppression

There are days that do not add up. A heaviness settles on you with no cause you can find. You hit a wall in prayer that you cannot explain. Not everything is an attack, but some things are, and the Christian life was never a picnic in the park. The enemy of your soul will do all he can to distract you, intimidate you or seduce you with compromise.

Moira was a church secretary, and every Monday morning seemed to bring a fresh row in the office. So she began praying through the armour of God in the car before she went in: the belt, the breastplate, the shoes, the shield, the helmet, the sword. Within a couple of months the Mondays had changed. And so had she.

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12)

James gives the order, and the order is everything. Submit first, then resist. You cannot exercise authority over the enemy while

keeping a treaty of compromise with the world. And note the promise: he flees. Not negotiates. Flees.

Corinthians tells you where most battles are fought: in the mind. When toxic thoughts whisper that you are worthless, forgotten or beyond redemption, you do not sit there and let the virus corrupt your hard drive. You put up a firewall. You arrest those lies and execute them with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Ephesians tells you who the real enemy is. It is not your husband, your boss, or the woman in the office. So you do not cower; you dress. **"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."** (Ephesians 6:11)

Some battles need more. Jesus said of one stubborn case, **"However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."** (Matthew 17:21) Fasting is a weapon, not a performance.

A word of care: heaviness can also be depression or illness. Resist the enemy, and see the doctor as well. Do not label every low day a demon.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, when the wall appears, check for open doors: unconfessed sin, bitterness, compromise. Submit them to God. Resist out loud in the name of Jesus. Put the armour on piece by piece in prayer. And put worship on.

The world's app: deny that any of it is real. It fails because you cannot resist an enemy you have decided does not exist.

God's app: recognise it, submit to God, resist out loud in the name of Jesus, and keep worshipping. Praise is a weapon, and it is not a gentle one.

Speak this: I submit to God. Devil, in the name of Jesus, I resist you, and you must flee.

Submit first, then resist, and watch the enemy run.

CHAPTER 49

Protection for Your Home and Family

You lock the doors, set the alarm and pay the insurance. But you have authority over the ground you stand on, and most Christians have never used it over their own front door.

Frank is a grandfather with a full house: his daughter, her husband and three grandchildren. Every morning he stands at the front gate and prays Psalm 91 over every name in the house, one by one, out loud. The neighbours probably think he is talking to the hedge. He is talking to the God who built a hedge round Job.

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.'" (Psalm 91:1-2)

"The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)

"No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17)

The whole premium on Psalm 91 is in one word: dwells. Not visits. Lives there. And the promise grows from that dwelling: **"Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."** (Psalm 91:9-11)

Psalm 34 says the angel of the Lord encamps. An encampment is not a passing patrol; it stays. Job had that kind of hedge, and even the devil complained about it (Job 1:10).

And Isaiah does not say no weapon will be formed. Weapons will be formed. They will not prosper. That is a better promise, because it assumes the fight and settles the outcome.

Jesus gave you the authority to use all this: "**Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.**" (Luke 10:19)

What about the patterns that run in families, passed down like old furniture? "**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.**" (Galatians 3:13) You can be the one where the old pattern stops.

On the first Passover God said, "**And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.**" (Exodus 12:13) We plead the blood of Jesus over our homes, not as a charm, but as a covenant.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, walk through your house and pray room by room. Pray over each child by name at the door in the morning. Remove anything that does not belong there (more on that in the next chapter).

The world's app: locks, alarms and insurance. Good things; keep them. But not one of them can stop a thing before it starts.

God's app: an encampment around the house, and a believer who prays over it out loud and by name.

Speak this: The Lord is my refuge and my fortress. I cover this house and every name in it with the blood of Jesus.

An alarm tells you the thief has come; the blood tells him he cannot.

CHAPTER 50

Nightmares, Fear of the Dark, and the Occult

There is a whole industry selling doorways that God has told us to keep shut. Horoscopes in the magazine, the "harmless" crystals, the horror film that leaves a ten-year-old staring at the wardrobe at three in the morning.

Carmen's eight-year-old son woke screaming three nights a week. Then she noticed the horror game he had brought home from a friend's house. They took it out of the house. They prayed together at bedtime. And she taught him one thing: when you wake up frightened, say "Jesus" out loud. Within a month he was sleeping through the night.

"You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness." (Psalm 91:5-6)

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD." (Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Psalm 91 names the terror by night and then simply tells you that you shall not be afraid of it. In its place God offers sweet sleep: **"When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet."** (Proverbs 3:24)

Deuteronomy is not superstition; it is a locksmith's list. Horoscopes, mediums, Ouija boards and the rest are not harmless entertainment. They are doors, and God tells us not to open them because of what walks through.

And 1 John settles the size question. Greater is He who is in you. Not equal. Greater.

If you have opened a door, here is how you shut it. First, renounce it out loud, by name: "In the name of Jesus I renounce the tarot, the séance, the spell." Second, remove the objects and destroy them. When the new believers in Ephesus turned to Christ, **"many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all."** (Acts 19:19) Third, plead the blood: **"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."** (Revelation 12:11) Fourth, command it to go, in the name of Jesus. Then fill the house with worship and the Word.

A word of care: children's nightmares can have ordinary causes too, such as screens late at night or a worry at school. If night fears are severe or will not lift, see a doctor.

The world's app: it is only a bit of fun. It fails because the fun is the packaging, not the product.

God's app: shut the doors, clear the house of what does not belong, and teach your children to speak the name of Jesus out loud in the dark.

Speak this: Greater is He who is in me. I renounce every open door and in Jesus' name I will not be afraid of the night.

The occult sells you a door; Jesus is the only one who can shut it.

CHAPTER 51

Deception and False Teaching

The most dangerous error is never the obvious one. It is the one that is ninety per cent true. We are fooled by a lie dressed in a good suit, quoting half a verse, with a beautiful smile and a million followers.

Howard was drawn in by an online teacher who promised wealth to the faithful. He gave, and waited, and gave again. Then a friend asked him a simple question: "Where does it say that?" So Howard started checking every claim against his own Bible, like the Bereans did. Within a month the shine had come off.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:15-16)

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11)

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1)

Jesus says, look at the fruit. You do not judge a tree by how loudly its leaves rustle; you look at what hangs on its branches. Does the teaching produce holy character, humble repentance and real obedience to the Word of God?

The Bereans were commended for checking the apostle Paul. If Paul could be checked, so can anybody, including me. And

notice that they did it daily. You cannot spot a counterfeit note if you have never handled the real one.

John says test the spirits. Not everything that sounds spiritual is from God. **"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."** (Galatians 1:8)

Paul warned Timothy about a time when people **"will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers."** (2 Timothy 4:3) False teachers do not have to hunt people down. People with itching ears go shopping for someone who will scratch them.

Then there is the crowd. A million views does not make a thing true. Following the crowd is like using a map app that keeps rerouting you into a swamp. **"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."** (Matthew 7:13)

So on an ordinary Tuesday, read your own Bible, every day. When someone tells you what it says, look it up. And if a promise sounds too good to be true, take it to the Word and to a mature believer before you take out your wallet.

The world's app: whatever feels right to you. It fails because feelings change with the weather, and the truth does not.

God's app: a Bible you actually read for yourself, daily, so that the counterfeit is obvious because you know the real thing.

Speak this: I will search the Scriptures daily. I will test what I hear, and I will follow the truth, not the crowd.

Feelings make a poor compass and an excellent steering wheel.

CHAPTER 52

The Religious Spirit

Here is a hard one, and I will not be shy about it, because Jesus was not. The fiercest words He ever spoke were not aimed at sinners. They were aimed at religion: the kind that keeps all the outward forms and has lost the living God.

I am not against the church. I have given my life to it. But a gospel with no power in it is not the one the apostles preached.

Geraldine had not missed a Sunday in forty years. And she had never prayed aloud on her own, in her own words. One Tuesday, alone in her kitchen, she tried. "Father," she said, and then she could not go on, because she was weeping. Forty years near Him, and that was the first time she had spoken to Him as a daughter.

"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8-9)

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:1)

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:5)

Matthew 15 puts it in four words: lips near, heart far. One of the great tragedies of our day is performance Christianity. We post a prayer, a verse and a ministry selfie in the same hour. Jesus sends us into the back room: **"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your**

Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6) Who are you when no one is looking?

The third verse pictures a form of godliness with the power switched off. That is the whole diagnosis, and it describes what has happened in some contemporary churches, where everything remains except the thing that made it alive, and entertainment fills the gap. Jesus' word still stands: **"My house shall be called a house of prayer."**(Matthew 21:13)

Watch for legalism too. **"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."** (Matthew 16:6) Leaven is tiny and invisible at first, but given time it puffs up the whole lump. Legalism, the belief that you earn God's favour by strict outward performance, poisons the gospel of grace.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, do one good thing nobody will ever know about. Pray in your own words, out loud, behind a shut door.

The world's app: keep the rituals and drop the power. It fails because rules can tidy up the outside of a person, and they cannot reach the inside.

God's app: a living relationship, a real new birth, and the Holy Spirit switched back on. **"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."** (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Speak this: I do not want a form without power. Holy Spirit, make me alive, and let me know my Father in secret.

Rules can make a man behave; only the Spirit has ever made one new.

PART SEVEN

The Big Ones

CHAPTER 53

Death and Dying

This chapter is about the one appointment nobody misses. The Christian is the only person on earth who can look it straight in the eye.

Most people don't. We say "if anything happens to me" when we mean "when I die". But the fear does not go away because we refuse to look at it. It just sits in the back room of the heart and hums.

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? ... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:55, 57)

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8)

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

Look at Paul in that first verse. He is taunting death to its face! A bee that has lost its sting can still buzz around your head and make you flap your arms. But it cannot hurt you. Where did the sting go? Jesus took it. He died to **"release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."** (Hebrews 2:15) He went into death on purpose and came out the other side with the keys.

Then the second verse. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. There is no waiting room in that sentence, no queue, no

long grey corridor. That is why Paul could say, "**For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**" (Philippians 1:21) You are not heading into the dark. You are expected.

And the third verse tells you what is waiting. No more tears, because He wipes them Himself. No more pain, no more goodbyes.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, talk about it with your family before you need to. Make your will; it is an act of love, not of gloom. Say your thank-yous and your sorrys now. And when someone you love is dying, read Scripture aloud to them. Hearing is one of the last things to go.

Albert was a retired postman. In his last weeks, in a hospice bed, he asked his grandson to come every afternoon and read him one verse: 2 Corinthians 5:8. Every day the boy read it, and every day Albert smiled and said, "Present with the Lord. That will do me." He had been delivering other people's letters all his life. At the end, he was simply waiting for his own address to change.

The world's app: do not think about it. It works for decades, and then it fails on the only day it is ever tested.

God's app: a death that was defeated in public by a Man who walked out of His own tomb. We weep at funerals; but we do not grieve like those who have no hope.

Speak this: Death has no sting for me. To be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord.

For the believer, death is a door with the Lord standing on the other side of it.

Fear of the Future and the End of the World

Every generation has thought it was the last. And the headlines are designed to keep you frightened, because frightened people keep watching. Wars, pandemics, collapsing markets, the next crisis. You scroll at midnight with your stomach knotted, and you go to bed feeling that the whole world is coming apart.

Kayleigh was nineteen. Every night she scrolled the news until two in the morning. She was not learning anything new; she was just feeding the dread.

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." (Matthew 24:6)

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:1-2)

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (Luke 21:28)

Notice what Jesus does in Matthew 24. He lists the frightening things Himself: wars, rumours of wars, famines, earthquakes. Then He gives an instruction: see that you are not troubled. He told us in advance so that we would not panic when it arrived. Nothing on the news tonight has taken Him by surprise.

Then look at John 14. "Let not your heart be troubled" is not a wish; it is a command, which means you can obey it. And He gives the reason: **"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."** (John 14:3) The story of the world does not end in a mushroom cloud or a slow fizzle. It ends with Jesus coming back.

And Luke 21:28 tells you which way to face. When the world is looking down in dread, the believer looks up in expectation. The same events that terrify the world are signposts to the Church.

Jesus also said, **"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."** (Matthew 24:44) Not anxious, but ready: shoes tied, lamps lit, doing His work. The point is to live faithfully today, because we have **"a kingdom which cannot be shaken"** (Hebrews 12:28).

So on an ordinary Tuesday, do what Kayleigh did. She swapped the last half-hour of news for John 14, and then she wrote a short list of what she could actually do tomorrow: ring her nan, finish her coursework, help at the youth group. Within a fortnight she was sleeping again. The world had not changed. Her direction of gaze had.

The world's app: doom, or denial. One eats your peace; the other leaves you unprepared. Both fail because neither knows how the story ends.

God's app: eyes open, heart untroubled, and work to do until He comes. Turn the news down, turn the Word up, and pray the last prayer of the Bible: **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"** (Revelation 22:20)

Speak this: My heart is not troubled. I know how this ends, and I have work to do today.

We do not read the headlines to find out how it ends; we have already read the last page.

Salvation: The App That Runs All the Others

Everything in this book runs on this one. Without it, the rest are good advice you cannot carry out, because the power to do them comes from Someone you have not yet let in.

Terry had been "a good bloke" all his life. He paid his bills, loved his kids and helped the neighbours. When the hospital chaplain sat by his bed after his heart scare and asked whether he was ready to meet God, Terry said, "I reckon I've been decent enough." The chaplain smiled and asked him one question: "What are you like when nobody is watching?" Terry did not answer. That night, alone in the ward, he opened the door.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3:20)

It is God's love that moves first, not your effort. "Whoever" means you are not excluded. "Should not perish" means there is something to be rescued from. "Everlasting life" means it does not wear out.

Romans 10:9 gives you the two moving parts: believe in the heart, say it with the mouth. **"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."** (Romans 10:10) Nothing to earn, no probation period.

And Revelation 3:20? Notice that the handle is on the inside. He knocks; He does not break in. He will not force His way into your life, and He will not leave the doorstep either.

You do not need a new coat of moral paint on your old life; you need a whole new engine. **"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** (John 3:3) **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

And it is a gift. **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Then take the first step of obedience and be baptised (Acts 2:38). When the Ethiopian official believed, he saw water by the road and asked, **"What hinders me from being baptized?"** (Acts 8:36) Nothing did.

The world's app: be a good person. It fails because the standard was never goodness. **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** (Romans 3:23) And every honest man knows what he is like when nobody is watching.

God's app: a gift, received, not achieved. If you have never opened the door, open it now.

Speak this: Jesus, I believe You died for me and that God raised You from the dead. I turn from my sin. Come in. You are my Lord, and I am Yours from today.

Heaven is not achieved; it is received, and the door handle is on your side.

Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

A great many believers are saved and running on half power, because nobody ever told them there was a second thing to ask for. They love Jesus and try very hard. And they are tired, because they are trying to live a supernatural life on natural strength.

Nadia had taught Sunday school for twelve years. But she had never asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit, because nobody had told her she could. One Tuesday evening she read Luke 11 and thought, "Well, why not?" She asked. Nothing dramatic happened in the room. But from that week her prayers had fire in them, and she found herself speaking about Jesus to the mums at the school gate without planning to.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13)

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)

Luke 11 removes the anxiety about whether He wants to. A father does not hand his hungry child a stone. You do not have to talk God into it. He is more eager to give than you are to receive.

Acts 1:8 tells you what the filling is for. Power! Not a warm feeling to keep to yourself, but power to be a witness. And Luke 24:49 tells you where it comes from: "from on high". He does not just tell you what to do; He empowers you to do it.

Here is what it looked like the first time: "**And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**" (Acts 2:4) And it did not stop at Pentecost. Under pressure, they prayed again, "**and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.**" (Acts 4:31)

Remember that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not a force. He teaches, He reminds you of what Jesus said, and He can be grieved (John 14:26; Ephesians 4:30). You are welcoming a Friend.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, ask, by name and on purpose. Believe that you have received, because your Father does not give stones. Yield your tongue, your plans and your fears to Him. Then expect Him to make you bold. And do it again tomorrow. Paul tells us to keep on being filled (Ephesians 5:18). This is a daily thing, not a monument you visit once.

The world's app: try harder to be a good Christian. It fails because it asks a natural man to live a supernatural life on his own batteries.

God's app: the Holy Spirit Himself, given to anyone who asks. Ask Him today.

Speak this: Father, fill me with Your Holy Spirit today. I receive Him by faith, and I receive the power to be a witness.

The Spirit is power from outside you, living inside you, for a purpose beyond you.

CHAPTER 57

Hearing God

People ask me whether God still speaks. The question is whether we have learned the sound of His voice.

Many believers feel that their prayers are a one-way phone call. They talk, they hang up, and they never hear a thing back. Meanwhile their days are drowning in noise: podcasts in the car, notifications on the desk, endless reels in bed. You have to quiet your surroundings on purpose to hear the still, small voice of God (1 Kings 19:12).

Euan was a busy father of three who told me flatly that God never spoke to him. I asked him when he gave God a chance. So he tried an experiment: fifteen minutes every morning with his Bible and a notebook, and his phone left out in the car. After a month he came back with a notebook full. "He was talking all along," he said. "I just never shut up long enough to hear Him."

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27)

"Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left." (Isaiah 30:21)

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

(Colossians 3:15)

Look at John 10:27. Jesus does not say, "My sheep might hear My voice if they are very spiritual." He says they do. A sheep does not learn its shepherd's voice from a textbook; it learns it by

being near him day after day. Little Samuel did not recognise the voice at first, but he learned to answer: "**Speak, for Your servant hears.**" (1 Samuel 3:10)

Isaiah 30:21 puts the voice behind you. It usually comes as you move, not while you sit waiting for a sign. You take a step in obedience, and the correction or confirmation comes: "This is the way."

And Colossians 3:15 gives you the umpire. The word translated "rule" is the word for the official who calls it in or out. When peace lifts, stop. When peace settles, go.

Here is your first test, every time: He will never say anything that contradicts what He has already written. Any "voice" that tells you to leave your wife, lie on your tax return or despise yourself is not your Shepherd. The Word is where you learn His accent.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, keep a fixed time and a fixed place, with your phone in another room. Read until something stops you. Write it down. Test it against Scripture. Then obey the small thing, because God tends to give the next word to the person who obeyed the last one.

The world's app: trust your gut. It fails because your gut has been wrong before and has no way of telling you when it is wrong now.

God's app: a Shepherd's voice, learned over time, tested against the Word and confirmed by peace. Turn the noise down today and give Him the first fifteen minutes.

Speak this: I am His sheep and I hear His voice. Let the peace of God be the umpire in me today.

God has never stopped speaking; most of us have just never turned the noise down.

CHAPTER 58

Telling Others

Most Christians are not silent because they do not care. They are silent because they are afraid of getting it wrong. What if they ask a question I can't answer? So we keep quiet, and we tell ourselves that our lives will do the talking. Let me take that fear off you.

Everything in this book was never meant to stop with you. God did not install His operating system in your life just so you could sit comfortably in a corner. Christianity is not a private luxury spa. It is an international rescue mission!

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes."
(Romans 1:16)

Look at the Great Commission. Jesus did not tell us to go and make converts who repeat a prayer and then live unchanged lives. He told us to make disciples. A disciple is a learner who is

taught to obey all that Christ commanded. Discipling is walking alongside someone and showing them how. You cannot lead someone down a path you refuse to walk yourself.

And notice what the commission rests on: "All authority". You are not going in your own name. Notice what it ends with: "I am with you always". You are not going alone.

Now look at 2 Timothy 2:2 and count the generations. Paul, to Timothy, to faithful men, to others also. Four generations in one verse! That is how the gospel got from a hillside in Galilee to you. Somebody passed it on.

Think of an apple you buy at the market. What is inside it? Seeds! And inside each seed is an orchard. Real spiritual fruit always contains the seed of multiplication. Jesus said, "**You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.**" (John 15:16) Fruit that remains is fruit that reproduces.

Let me show you two believers. When Claire gave her life to Jesus, she did not lock her new freedom away in a private journal. She noticed the colleagues at work who were drowning in anxiety, and she started meeting them for coffee. She shared the promises of Christ that had set her free, and taught them how to pray, how to read the Word and how to forgive. Within two years, some of those colleagues were discipling others in their own streets.

Gordon, on the other hand, spent years going to seminars, collecting study Bibles and critiquing sermons. But he never shared the gospel with a single soul. Gordon was a reservoir, collecting water that slowly went stale. Claire was a well, letting living water flow out. Which one are you?

"But I don't know what to say!" Peter has the answer: "**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope**

that is in you, with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:15) Your life raises the question; your mouth answers it. And you do not need a degree. You need your own story: what you were, what He did, what you are now. The woman at the well had been a believer for about an hour when she ran into town and said, **"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"** (John 4:29) And many in that town believed because of her word.

Pray, too. **"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."** (Matthew 9:37-38) The bottleneck is never a shortage of hurting people. It is a shortage of obedient labourers. Pray for labourers, and then be the answer to your own prayer.

So on an ordinary Tuesday, think of somebody close to you who is treating worry with a podcast and grief with a bottle. Sit down with them. Show them there is an app for that. Give them their three verses, and teach them to find the next three on their own. Then, when they are strong, ask them who they are going to sit down with.

The world's app: keep your faith private. It sounds polite, but it fails a simple test of love. If you had found the cure, silence would not be politeness.

God's app: your own testimony, given gently, to the person in front of you, and then walking with them until they can do the same for somebody else.

Speak this: I am not ashamed of the gospel. I will tell the one You put in front of me today, and I will teach them to tell another.

A reservoir keeps the water; a well gives it away and never runs dry.

CLOSING

Installed, Not Downloaded: Running on the Word Every Day

Fifty-five problems. Fifty-five answers. Worry, fear, grief, debt, lust, a difficult boss, a broken marriage, a frightening diagnosis, the fear of death itself. And not one of those answers had to be invented, downloaded or paid for, because every one of them was already installed on the day you believed.

Have you noticed something as you have gone through this book? Every app has been the same app. Every chapter's answer has come from the same Person, speaking through the same Book, by the same Spirit. You do not need fifty-five different devices. You need one device, and every app is already on it.

Here is how the Bible itself sums up this whole book.

"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:3-4)

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it

was founded on the rock." (Matthew 7:24-25)

Read Peter's inventory again. All things. Not most things. All things that pertain to life, this life, the one with the mortgage and the diagnosis and the difficult son-in-law, and godliness. And notice how they come: "through the knowledge of Him" and through His "exceedingly great and precious promises". The promises are the delivery system. When you take hold of a promise, you are taking hold of the very nature of God.

Now look at Hebrews 4:12. Living. Not a record of what God once said, but the voice of a God who is speaking now. It cuts. It reaches the places no counsellor can reach, the line between soul and spirit, the thoughts and motives you have never admitted to anyone. And it never goes out of date. **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."** (Matthew 24:35)

Here is the difference in one sentence. The world's answers are advice. Advice tells you what to do and then leaves the room. The Word is power. It tells you what is true and then stays to make it happen. **"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."** (Isaiah 55:11)

Jesus told the story of the house on the rock at the end of His greatest sermon. Here is the second half: **"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."** (Matthew 7:26-27)

Notice that the exact same storm hit both houses! The same rain, the same floods, the same wind. Jesus never promised that the wise man would get better weather. The difference between collapse and standing firm was not the size of the storm, but the

depth of the foundation. And notice what the foundation actually is. Both men heard. Only one did. The rock is not hearing the Word; it is hearing it and doing it. James says the man who only hears is deceiving himself (James 1:22).

That brings me to the title of this chapter. There is a world of difference between a download and an installation. A download sits in a folder. It takes up space. But it does not do anything. An installation runs the machine. It shapes everything the device does.

Many Christians have the Word downloaded. They own six Bibles. They have favourite verses on the bedroom wall and a folder of saved sermons. But the teachings of Jesus were never meant to be collected like bookmarks or admired like inspiring quotes. They were meant to run your life.

And here is the trap I see most often: opening the Word only in a crisis. We treat the Bible like an emergency kit we have never opened, and then, when the storm comes, we are fumbling with the lid while the water is rising. You cannot dig a foundation in the middle of a flood. You dig it on the sunny days.

God's way is daily. **"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."** (Joshua 1:8) And the man who does that **"shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."** (Psalm 1:3) A tree by a river does not panic in a drought. Its roots found the water long before the dry season came.

This is also how you are changed. **"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."** (Romans 12:2) The world squeezes

you into its mould every day through every screen you look at. The Word renews your mind every day you let it. Whichever you run on is the one that will shape you.

Has your fire gone low? Jesus said to a busy, hard-working church, "**Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**" (Revelation 2:4) The cure He gave them was to remember, repent and do the first works again. Go back to the Book the way you came to it at the start: hungry.

So here is what I would ask of you. Treat this book as a toolbox you carry every day, not one you leave in the garage. Take the one problem that is running loudest in your life this week. Find its chapter. Write the three verses out by hand, because something happens when you write it that does not happen when you only read it. Say them out loud every morning for a week, because faith comes by hearing. Then do what they say, in the small thing, today. Next week, take the next one.

Don't just admire the teachings of Jesus. Submit to them. Don't just agree with Scripture. Apply it. Don't just collect verses like trophies. Let them become tools.

Downloaded, the Word sits in a folder; installed, it runs your life.

CHAPTER 60

Prayer of Praise and Commitment

We have come to the end of the book, but not to the end of the matter. Let's finish where every app begins: with God Himself. Pray this out loud with me. Say it slowly, and mean every line. I have written it as "I", because this is your prayer, between you and your Father.

Heavenly Father, I come to You with a heart full of praise. I worship You as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Architect of my soul, and the Developer of my life. You knew every fear, every worry, every grief and every lack I would ever face, long before I faced them. And You did not leave me to grope around in the dark. You spoke to all of it, and You put the Book into my hands. Thank You that Your Word is not advice but power, a lamp to my feet, and that when I open it, You are there.

Lord Jesus, I praise You for the cross. Thank You that You took my sin, my shame and my sentence on Yourself. Thank You that Your blood has washed me clean, and that every chain the enemy put on me is broken. Thank You that You walked out of the tomb, so that death has lost its sting and my future is secure in You.

Father, I confess that I have tapped the world's dead icons for years. I have run to the screen, the plate, the bottle, the bank balance and the opinions of people, when I should have run to You. I have carried what You told me to cast on You. I have held on to what You told me to release. I have opened Your Word only when I was desperate, and I have tried to live the Christian

life on my own frail willpower. Forgive me, Lord, and let that stop today. Take away every stony place in my heart and make it soft towards You.

Today I surrender every department of my life to You. I give You my mind: let me think Your thoughts and arrest every lie. I give You my tongue: let me speak life, truth and blessing. I give You my eyes and my body, in purity. I give You my money: let me be generous and content. I give You my marriage, my children, my parents and my friendships: teach me to love as You love and to forgive as You have forgiven me. I give You my work, my health, my sleep, my past and my future. I give You my fears about tomorrow, and I give You the day I die. All of it is Yours. Jesus, You are Lord.

Holy Spirit, fill me afresh today. I cannot do any of this on my own batteries, and I am not going to try. Fill me with Your power, Your peace, Your love and Your boldness. Teach me to abide in Jesus, so that His life flows through me. Tune my ears to the Shepherd's voice, and let Your peace be the umpire in my heart.

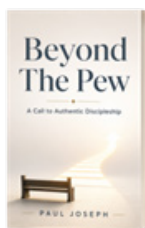
I commit myself now not only to be a hearer of Your Word, but a doer. I will read it every day, not just when I am in trouble. I will speak it out loud over every problem that comes, and build my house on the rock by doing what it says.

And Lord, do not let me be a reservoir. Make me a well. Give me a burning love for the people around me who are drowning in the world's answers. Open my eyes to the one You put in front of me today, and give me the patience to walk with them until they are strong enough to show somebody else. Send labourers into Your harvest, Lord, and count me in.

I take You at Your Word, today and every day.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the living Word, my Saviour and my Lord, Amen.

Other Books by Paul



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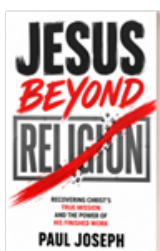
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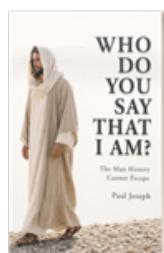
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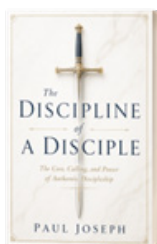
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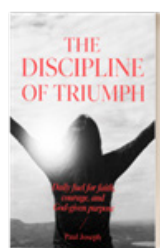
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Open it in the middle, on a bad day. The Author is present.

"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness."

2 Peter 1:3



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